

Marco Franceschini, Chiara Livio, Lidia Wojtczak (eds)

BHŪTĀRTHAKATHANE... SARASVATĪ

Reading Poetry as a History Book

Studies on the History of Śaivism IV



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UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE
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IV

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Preface

Marco Franceschini, Chiara Livio, Lidia Wojtczak*

ślāghyaḥ sa eva guṇavān rāgadveṣabahiṣkṛtā |
bhūtārthakathane yasya stheyasyeva sarasvatī ||
Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.7

Worthy of praise is that noble-minded man alone
Whose speech, like that of a judge,
Remains free from passion or hatred
In the telling of things past.

The Sanskrit title of this volume,¹ *Bhūtārthakathane . . . Sarasvatī*, is drawn from a verse of Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, the twelfth-century chronicle of the kings of Kashmir, widely regarded as the Sanskrit historical work *par excellence*. In this verse, Kalhaṇa presents his work as a poet-historian, likening his scholarly speech to that of a judge: impartial and objective in recounting the past.

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This claim is part of a longer lecture (*Rājataranṅinī* 1.3–24)² in which Kalhaṇa argues for a more rigorous approach to history-writing. His goal is clear: to restore order and certainty and to correct all the mistakes of earlier historical narrations. Kalhaṇa does not hesitate to criticise those who failed in their duty to history, even the great Kashmiri polymath Kṣemendra is not spared from his scorn. For Kalhaṇa, the key to accurate history lies in connecting the often fragmentary and erroneous information given by previous chronicles through the usage of primary sources—manuscripts, royal grants, and inscriptions. He alone would be the one to pin down the strands of the fabric of history, so annoyingly flapping in the wind.

But what can we consider ‘history’ when we speak about poetry (*kāvya*)? This question was the central theme of an International Symposium held in Bologna in December 2022. The event, which shares its title with this volume, brought together a group of scholars engaged in the study of South Asian *kāvya* traditions. The lively discussions and exchanges that unfolded there not only sparked new insights but also helped shape many of the contributions and interpretative approaches applied in this volume.

A key concern that emerged during the preparation of the Bologna Symposium, as is also reflected throughout the contributions to this collection, is the tension between two distinct but overlapping tendencies: the desire to extract ‘hard’ *historical facts* from poetic texts, and the need to attend to the *history of poetry* itself—its forms, conventions, and evolving self-understanding.

The first tendency, rooted in a positivist orientation, is not without value and treats poetry as a source of verifiable data, privileging chronology, external references, and seemingly less poetic passages to study specific people, events, and contexts related to the poet’s surroundings. We see poets citing their patrons, describing their land, discussing the production of *kāvya* itself. This is a treasure trove for all the information we might want to preserve and detect as ‘history.’ Yet, isolating historical reality from literary embellishment is not always productive when applied to poetry. If we focus only on lexical occurrences of the past and their external corroboration, we might miss the interpretive and aesthetic richness through which many Sanskrit poets engaged with history. Kalhaṇa’s self-conscious commitment to factual accuracy remains exceptional, his work aims to be decidedly historical and he is what we can now call a historian. In most other cases, however, the historical traces preserved in *kāvya* are not the works’ main focus. Yet,

² Stein, Marc Aurel, ed. (1892) 1988. *Kalhaṇa’s Rājataranṅinī. Chronicles of the Kings of Kashmir*. Volume 3. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

even when we are left without explicitly mentioned historical facts or geographical locations, the descriptive passages that conventionally occupy most *kāvya* works can still help define history. Texts can aim for a broader, often universal, aesthetic or moral resonance, yet invite recognition from contemporary audiences through shared cultural referents; specific, described landscapes or emotional tones serve to ground the text in lived experience while simultaneously gesturing to timeless truths.

One approach to reading poetry as a history book involves, then, zooming in on the small details to detect general tendencies and cultural practices within a poetic work that may indirectly speak to the author's historical positioning and local affiliations. For instance, the subordination of one deity to another in a literary work that is not religious in scope can say a lot about the poet's religious milieu. The prominence of a particular sacred geography, in which a lesser-known site is described more in depth than other better-known pilgrimage centres, can similarly suggest localised devotional priorities. Even small iconographic details, such as the attributes of certain deities, can resonate with regionally specific artistic and archaeological traditions. This is especially evident when regional inflections subtly reshape otherwise pan-Indian poetic conventions. For instance, a region-specific evolution of genres can provide literary and historical traces of local courtly and cultural settings. In other cases, poetry may reflect historical experience by projecting an idealised past onto politically fragmented presents. Romanticised depictions of unity and wealth can sometimes mask the precarity of the poet's reality, marked by unstable courtly life or dynastic changes. All these elements, which rarely speak in isolation, can help reconstruct both cultural and literary history if taken as cumulative evidence.

A second approach is that of considering that poets not only embedded history within their works but also actively participated in shaping the literary history of poetry. When poets adapt or push against established aesthetic norms, they show both their creativity and how their work was shaped by the taste and knowledge of their community of listeners. For instance, formal and conventional practices in poetry—such as engaging with previous *kāvya* works through literary borrowing or poetic allusion, which are often far from being mere acts of homage or incidental gestures—can signal not only a poet's means of entering into dialogue with past masters while reasserting their voice and position, but also a deliberate strategy of historical engagement. These intertextual dialogues are essential for understanding how poets envisioned their place within a broader literary landscape. In this sense, the history of poetry is not just found in what poets explicitly say about the past, but also in how they frame their poetic identity as inheritors, transmitters, and creators of tradition.

With this in mind, the authors in this volume shape the concept of history through the lens of their scholarly interests, starting from analysing primary sources in Sanskrit and Tamil, to discussing broader themes such as history in literature, literary history, and imagined and real spaces in *kāvya*.

Csaba Dezső explores the earliest Sanskrit Buddhist *kāvyas*—Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapaṇṭi* (third century CE), Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* (first half of the fourth century CE), and Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* (around 400 CE) in 'Referentiality and historicity in early Buddhist narrative *kāvya*.' After giving an exhaustive background for each text, Dezső considers questions of referentiality and localization. Kumāralāta's work has concrete ties to a lived reality, with names of kings such as Aśoka, Kaṇiṣka, and Huviṣka, as well as many Greater Gandhāran toponyms mentioned. The two *Jātakamālās*, on the other hand, show a tendency towards universality and set their stories 'in an unspecified past, often at unnamed locations and with the nameless Bodhisattva as the protagonist.' Dezső proposes to consider this development through a reflection on how these texts may have been used. Taking clues from the texts themselves, as well as from a recently reconstructed Preacher's Manual (**Saddharmaparikathā*), he demonstrates how the *Jātakamālā* collections were part of the 'preacher's toolkit' and were 'used in sermons to illustrate the Buddha's teachings.' In Dezső's chapter, we see *kāvya* 'put in the service of homiletics,' deeply engaged in the very real missions of the Buddhist preachers.

Whitney Cox, in his chapter 'Liquid swords: History through allusion in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*,' encourages the reader to consider patron-centered *kāvya* as a hermeneutical key for the understanding of the complex relationships of writers, patrons, and their audience. Cox urges us to consider these texts not only as historical literature but also to see them within the history of literature and to consider that works of literature are themselves 'invested in making history.' Using a theoretical framework of poetic allusion as his starting point, Cox takes his readers on an excursion following the development of the literary trope of *dhārājala*, 'water on the edge of a sword's blade.' He proves that a close and sensitive reading of a multivalent literary allusion appearing in *kāvya* spanning the four or so centuries between the flourishing of Bāṇa (fl. ca. 625–650) and Bilhaṇa (late eleventh century CE) can tell us much about the historical realities contextual to the works, about the authors and their milieu, about the court and its anxieties, and the personal stories of the poets themselves.

Tancredi Padova is also interested in the idea of poetic allusion as a historical strategy, and elaborates it in his chapter 'Poeticising history, historicising poetry. On literary borrowing in late medieval historical-biographical

Sanskrit *kāvya*.’ The chapter, which focuses on the *Madhurāvijaya* by Gaṅgādevī, a poetess of fourteenth-century Vijayanagara, is a study in how borrowing at the level of both the verse and the narrative can teach us much about the poets’ ‘historicising engagement with the literary tradition.’ As he traces literary borrowings from both Sanskrit and Telugu poetry in Gaṅgādevī’s work, Padova illustrates how these ‘layers of *kāvya*’ point to a clear concern among poets of the second millennium CE for the ‘question of form in historical narration.’ This ultimately allows him to discuss the existence of a common, generally accepted mode of composition for ‘historical’ *kāvya* and shed light on the literary fortune and circulation of these works in the late medieval period.

Luther Obrock, in his ‘A translation of the *Sujanadurjanavivaraṇa*, the second chapter of Maṅkha’s *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*,’ introduces us to a crucial canto in Maṅkha’s (twelfth-century Kashmir) court poem, in which *kāvya* is portrayed as being in a state of decline; however, ‘a true poet [...] can revive the ideal of poetry.’ The chapter, an overview of ‘Good and Bad Men,’ is not only an important work of poetry but also a meta-reflection on poetry itself. Poetry is on the side of the ‘Good Men’ and the chapter paints *kāvya* as ‘an ethical stance,’ in a ‘battle demanding the participation of an educated and involved audience.’ Obrock demonstrates that Maṅkha was most interested in the effects that poetry could have on the world and what made poetry successful. The second chapter of the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* is a window into the ‘intellectual life of poetry in medieval Kashmir’ and a brilliant example of *kāvya* telling ‘its own story.’ Obrock’s translation of the entire chapter is furnished with detailed notes on questions of translation and grammar, but he also frequently allows us to hear the opinions of the commentator Jonarāja, one of Kashmir’s great historians after Kalhaṇa.

Andrey Klebanov focuses on the historical context and intellectual milieu of the commentators of Sanskrit court poems in his chapter ‘On the “Bengali school” of commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya*’ by Bhāravi. His approach is not one of searching for historical clues in Bhāravi’s poem itself, but rather of shedding light on the history of the text’s transmission in a localised, seemingly hermetic scholarly milieu. With textual reuse as his hermeneutic tool, Klebanov examines the connections between four commentaries—the *Kirātapañjikā* by Suvarṇarekha, the *Sārāvalī* by Harikaṇṭha, the *Kirātacandrikā* by Pītāmbara, and the *Subodhaṭikā* by Ṭaḷaṇa—whose distinct style and engagement with the core text allows them to be seen as ‘comprising a distinct local tradition of interpreting the *Kirātārjunīya*.’ In particular, by introducing and describing the manuscripts that preserve the *Kirātapañjikā* and the *Kirātacandrikā*, he analyses the text-historical data

gleaned from both internal content and external sources and highlights the regional and intellectual influences of the Bengali school of interpretation on Sanskrit literature. Klebanov's chapter is prosopographical, with connections being made not only between the commentators creating a clear chain of transmission, but also between the authors and their greater intellectual and historical contexts. Klebanov's chapter gives us 'a rare glimpse into the scholarly methods and extensive learning involved in the composition of commentaries on literary works' and showcases the 'profound knowledge and intellectual engagement' of these premodern scholars.

Ofer Peres' 'Real places imagined: On the historical value of Tamil *Talapurāṇams*' brings to life the hustle and bustle of sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. Peres explores the genre of the *talapurāṇams*, 'place descriptions,' and focuses on the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* composed by Maṛaiṇāṇa Campantar (sixteenth century CE), a poem describing Aruṇācalam/Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and its environs. He undertakes a deep philological, cultural, and historical analysis of the role of *pāraśavas*, temple drummers, who are repeatedly mentioned by Maṛaiṇāṇa Campantar in what he calls the 'lyrical prelude' of the poem. His findings are significant and tell us much about the social history of a group of people who otherwise do not find representation in 'traditional' historical records. Thanks to this analysis of the text, supported by evidence from temple inscriptions, Peres opens a window into the temple life of sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, which would otherwise remain obscure and proves that 'pre-modern literary texts can help to fill in' many of the gaps in our knowledge on the complicated ecosystem of the pre-modern South Indian temple.

Lidia Wojtczak explores the revival and transformation of messenger poetry (*dūta*- and *sandēśakāvya*) in medieval Kerala as part of a broader ideological and literary movement shaped by the region's post-Cēra political fragmentation in her chapter '*Brahmakṣetra, brahmakṣatra*: The Keralan literary landscape in messenger poetry.' Wojtczak situates the regional Sanskrit works of the *Śukasandēśa* (thirteenth to fourteenth century CE) and the *Kokilasandēśa* (fifteenth century) within the development of an independent Sanskrit tradition that responded to the local religious, political, and social realities. With their detailed evocations of temple towns, Brahmin settlements, and scholarly centres, these works construct literary maps of the Malabar coast and map a *brahmakṣetra* or *brahmakṣatra*, a Kerala imagined as a land governed by Brahminical authority, both spiritual and social. Wojtczak argues that these *kāvya*s do not merely describe geography; they create cognitive spaces. Moreover, the medieval boon in the production of Keralan *sandēśakāvya*s 'could have been part of the program of pro-

jecting a romanticised past onto an uncertain and precarious present.’ By examining what these poems include and exclude, Wojtczak reveals how messenger poetry served not only as a literary form but also as a tool for cultural memory and regional identity-making in early modern South Asia.

Judit Törzsök continues on the topic of aerial journeys in her ‘Murāri’s aerial view of India: Searching for historical clues in the *Anargharāghava*’ by analysing the scene of the flight of Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā in Murāri’s play *Anargharāghava* (ninth century CE). While the subject of the play is mythological, the flight sequence functions less as a geographic account and more as a canvas for intertextual reflection and subtle historical signalling. Törzsök examines how historical cues are woven into the fabric of this scene and throughout the play, not through explicit events, but through stylistic, religious, and iconographic references. For instance, the pervasive presence of Śiva, along with the subordination of Viṣṇu, suggests a Śaiva religious orientation for either the poet or his patronage. Moreover, the prominence of sacred sites from the Andhra region, along with distinctive iconographic features—such as the depiction of a one-legged Śiva whose form is attested in Odisha and southern Andhra—anchors the work in a specific cultural geography. Törzsök connects such iconographic evidence, corroborated by art-historical research, to broader religious and regional affiliations, offering insights into the intellectual environment in which the play was composed. The evidence presented in the chapter additionally allows Törzsök to formulate a new hypothesis about the time and place of the poet Murāri.

Dominic Goodall shifts the focus to inscriptions with his chapter ‘Khmer history through *kāvya*? An edition and translation of K. 1236 (763 CE) of the reign of Jayavarman I *bis*,’ and presents the reader with the panegyric *kāvya* found on an eighth-century rock inscription of King Jayavarman I *bis* of Cambodia. Goodall’s chapter is both a philological enterprise, as he reconstructs, translates, and annotates the text of this important Sanskrit inscription, as well as an exploration of the historical significance of the flowery panegyric to the king. Goodall points out that not only historical facts about King Jayavarman I *bis* may be gathered from the text, but that the cultural history the inscription speaks to is just as significant. We learn about the author of the text and his milieu, including the aspirations of his royal patron. Goodall shows us clearly that the poet was a man well-versed in not only the classics of Sanskrit poetry but also in the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* and Daṇḍin’s treatise on poetry, the *Kāvyaḍarśa*. The style of the inscription, as Goodall proves, is up to date with the trends of the Indian subcontinent, which could, as Goodall notes, suggest ‘rather close communication

between even the more distant parts of the world of Sanskrit influence' already in the pre-Angkorian period.

Lastly, Dániel Balogh brings a taste of Digital Humanities in his chapter 'Textual analysis methodology and royal representation in copperplate grants' by discussing a replicable methodological framework for integrating digital textual analysis into historical research. In particular, Balogh uses the CATMA digital annotation tool to code and analyse the highly formalised, concise, and rhetorically efficient copperplate land grant charters issued by the Eastern Cālukyas, focusing on the representation of public personages as they 'would have been perceived by the original audience [...] in the historical context in which they were circulated.' With his research, Balogh shows that the methodology of textual analysis applied to these texts provides researchers with precious data that integrates and enriches that which can be obtained through a study conducted using more traditional methods—in other words, that it is possible to fruitfully bridge a close reading of the textual content with scalable quantitative analysis.

The authors of the chapters shatter the adage that *kāvya* is a literature that sets itself out of time and space, with all traces of the 'historical' erased by the homogeneity of literary conventions, poetic ornament, and studied universality. On the contrary, if we extend our study of *kāvya* beyond these foundational conventions, we immediately meet scores of poets who were not only engaged in decidedly historical projects but were also consciously, bravely, and sometimes even audaciously making history themselves. The chapters show us what can be learned if we read *kāvya* in context, both socio-historical and literary. They illustrate that premodern South Asian poets were deliberately engaging with their past and present, and speaking to future audiences as they entered into literary discussions that had often been going on for centuries.

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the international symposium held at the Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna on December 15–16, 2022, which laid the foundations for this volume. Our heartfelt thanks go to our co-organiser, Alessandro Battistini, and to our discussants: Victor D'Avella, Martina Dello Buono, Florinda De Simini, Kengo Harimoto, Csaba Kiss, Saverio Marchignoli, and Luigi Singh. We are especially grateful to Florinda De Si-

Preface

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Referentiality and historicity in early Buddhist narrative *kāvya*

Csaba Dezső

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At the inception of *kāvya* in South Asia we find Buddhist poets. Aśvaghoṣa composed his epics and plays around 100 CE, and Mātṛceṭa his hymns perhaps a few decades later. As for narrative literature, the earlier *jātaka* and *avadāna* genres were transformed into prosimetric *kāvya* by Kumāralāta in his *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapañkti* (KD) in the third century CE. These were followed by two *Jātakamālās*; Āryaśūra's (ĀJM) in the first half of the fourth century CE, and Haribhaṭṭa's (HJM) around 400 CE. This paper examines the presence (or absence) of referentiality in these three narrative *kāvyas*, and to what extent they can be used as historical sources for the time and place of their composition. On the one hand, we explore the introduction of historical figures and recognisable geographical locations into these

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fictional narratives: if it happens at all, and if so, in what context and with what function. On the other hand, we use the figure of the *dhārmakathika*, ‘preacher,’ as an example of a Buddhist professional. The preachers are well-known from non-literary sources of the first centuries of the common era, and their activities, prestige and interactions with other members of society, from kings to city-dwellers, are described in some detail in these three narrative texts—texts that in fact belonged to the toolkit of these preachers. Both in these stories and in the recently discovered preacher’s manual we can observe how such narrative literature was used, how its stories were embedded as illustrations in homilies, and how their audience was formed.

1. *Introducing the three early Buddhist narrative kāvyas*

Kumāralāta was a Sarvāstivādin Buddhist monk from Taxila, probably living in the third century CE.¹ He was a renowned scholar, regarded by Xuanzang as ‘the founder of the Sautrāntika school’ (Li 1996, 327). Beside his great *kāvya*, Kumāralāta wrote a Sanskrit grammar called *Kaumāralātam* (fragments of which were edited by Lüders in 1930, reprinted in Lüders 1940), and probably also other works, e.g. on meditation, which are known only from scattered citations (Horiuchi 2019, 295). Kumāralāta’s narrative *kāvya* is fully extant in a Chinese translation entitled *Da zhuang-yan lun*, attributed to Kumārajīva. This Chinese text was translated by Édouard Huber in 1908 under the title *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, as a work of Aśvaghōṣa. Heinrich Lüders, however, identified many fragments of the Sanskrit original of this Chinese translation among the manuscripts brought from Central Asia (Qizil) to Germany, which contained clear indications that the author was Kumāralāta.² Lüders published a masterful edition of these fragments in 1926. A long debate followed between scholars who claimed that the Chinese translation is that of Aśvaghōṣa’s *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, and those who accepted Lüders’s conclusions about Kumāralāta’s authorship (Hahn 1982, 314–319). The dispute was resolved by Michael Hahn, who in 1982 published a study of the Tibetan translation of a text that corresponds to the first chapter of the Chinese *Da zhuang-yan lun*, and its Tibetan title clearly tallies with the title of Kumāralāta’s work as seen in the Sanskrit fragments,

¹ Lüders 1940, 691: *bhikṣos tākṣaśīlakasya*. On his dating and Sarvāstivādin allegiance, see Horiuchi 2019, 293.

² *āryakaumāralātāyāṃ kalpanāmaṇḍitikāyāṃ | kalpanālaṅkārtikāyāṃ*, see Lüders 1926, 18–19.

namely *Dr̥ṣṭāntapañkti*. More recently, Diego Loukota Sanclemente wrote an excellent doctoral dissertation on Kumāralāta's *kāvya*, in which he edited for the first time several fragments of the text from Kucha and Bāmiyān (Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 328–383).

Today we possess a Chinese translation of all ninety exempla (*dr̥ṣṭānta*) of Kumāralāta's *magnum opus*, and Sanskrit fragments of about seventy-five. Among these *dr̥ṣṭāntas*, some belong to the *jātaka* and *avadāna* genres (e.g. no. 64: *Śibijātaka*, no. 69: *Śaddantajātaka*, no. 70: *Mṛgaajātika*, no. 16, 27 and 54: the stories of Aśoka and Upagupta), but some fall into the broader category of 'pious legends,' not containing stories of previous lives, but rather accounts of (near) contemporary events, with settings (often an urban milieu) and characters that were probably familiar to the audience of the time.

Ārya (or Ācārya, or Bhadanta) Śūra probably lived in the first half of the fourth century CE (Hahn 1993, 37). His *Jātakamālā* is referred to as 'the poem of a great poet from the South' (*dākṣiṇātyamahākavikāvya*) by Ratnaśrījñāna in his commentary on the *Kāvyaadarśa* (Thakur and Jha 1957, 34), and according to the author of the *Jātakamālāṭīkā*, Bhadantācāryaśūra was 'the son of a Southern king' (*dākṣiṇātyabhūpatisuta*), who, having abdicated and become a Buddhist monk, wrote the *Jātakamālā* on palm-leaves during his wanderings (Basu 1989, 242). Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* has survived completely in the original Sanskrit and in a Tibetan translation. It contains thirty-four *jātakas*, thirty of which have very close parallels in the Pāli *jātaka* collection. Śūra addresses mostly kings and princes and the stories reflect a courtly milieu. His goal is to persuade kings to adopt Buddhist morality instead of the politics prescribed in the *Arthaśāstra*.³ Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* was first edited by Hendrik Kern in 1891. Peter Khoroché, using important manuscripts not used by Kern, published about two thousand variant readings in 1987, and thus substantially improved upon Kern's text. Khoroché also published an English translation in 1989. Albrecht Hanisch published a new critical edition of the first fifteen *jātakas* in 2005. Justin Meiland's new edition and English translation appeared in the Clay Sanskrit Library in 2009. The anonymous *Jātakamālāṭīkā* and the *Jātakamālāpañjikā* of Vīryasiṃha were edited as part of a PhD dissertation by Ratna Basu in 1989.

³ Khoroché 1989, xvii–xviii; Meiland 2009, vol. I, XXVI–XXVII, XXX–XXXII; Eltschinger 2022, 348–356.

It is owing to the industrious work of Michael Hahn that Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* is largely available in its Sanskrit original today (alongside a Tibetan translation). Hahn began working on Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* in the 1970s, and, having discovered manuscripts transmitting the Sanskrit text, he published his findings in several instalments over the following decades, culminating (in 2011) in a volume containing seventeen *jātakas*. In 2019, using Hahn's Nachlass and the available manuscript material, Martin Straube published an outstanding critical edition of all the available Sanskrit text of Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* (about 80% of the original). Peter Khoroche's excellent English translation, though it already appeared in 2017, was based on Straube's work.

Haribhaṭṭa post-dates Ācārya Śūra, whom he praises in the second verse of his introduction, and he must have composed his work before 445 CE, which is the date of a Chinese compilation that quotes from its *Prabhāsa-jātaka*.⁴ The colophon of the Tibetan translation calls Haribhaṭṭa a 'king's son' and a 'teacher' (Hahn 2011, 1n3). The concluding verse of the Tibetan translation says that 'tormented by the sin of doing harm in Kashmir and realising this, he [Haribhaṭṭa] wanted to emigrate; giving up his life in the Himālaya, he went to heaven.'⁵ Haribhaṭṭa's *kāvya* consists of thirty-five *jātakas*. Unlike Āryaśūra's *jātakas*, Haribhaṭṭa's stories revisit diverse sources and the adaptation is always strikingly original (Khoroche 2017, 6). As Hahn previously observed in his first article on Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā*, Haribhaṭṭa treats his sources with greater poetic freedom than Āryaśūra, often excluding or adding things (Hahn 1973, 50).

Their authors regarded these three prosimetric works as *kāvyas*. Kumāralāta qualified the title of his composition, *Dr̥ṣṭāntapañkti*, 'Series of Exempla,' with the attributes *kalpanāmandītikā* and *kalpanālaṃkṛtikā*, 'whose ornamentation consists in imaginative composition' or 'lovingly / slightly ornamented by imagination,'⁶ and it is likely that he had in mind the

⁴ Steiner 2019, 209 (with further references to Hahn's and Demoto's studies). A more cautious *terminus ante quem* given by Steiner is 517 CE.

⁵ Translated by Hahn in Hahn 2011, 7–8.

⁶ This attribute can be variously interpreted. One could take it as a *babuvṛīhi* compound, with the *-ka-* suffix functioning as a *babuvṛīhi*-marker, and *maṇḍita / alaṃkṛta* used *bhāve* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.3.114) as neuter nouns. This is how Hahn seems to have understood it when he translated it as 'deren Schmuck in ihrer künstlerischen Ausgestaltung besteht' (Hahn 1982, 316). Lüders noted the parallel with the title of the fourth *sarga* of the *Saundarananda*, namely *Bhāryāyācitaka* (Lüders 1926, 19), which also seems to be a *babuvṛīhi*. Alternatively, one might take *maṇḍita / alaṃkṛta* denoting the

use of poetic ornamentation, *alaṃkāras*. Such ornamentation makes these stories more attractive, as he writes in the introduction of Story 20: [*dṛṣṭāntaḥ?*] *svakalpanālaṃkṛto 'smābhir evaṃ abhidhīyamānaḥ śobbheta*,⁷ '[the exemplum,] ornamented by my own imagination, if I relate it in this way, may become delightful.' Kumāralāta clearly considered it important to make these educative stories beautiful through ornamentation, using his creative imagination. Āryaśūra explicitly calls his work *kāvya* when he says: *pūrvaprajanmasu muneś caritādbhutāni bhaktyā svakāvya kusumāñjali-nārcayisyē*, 'with this handful of flowers, which is my poem, I shall venerate with devotion the wonderful deeds that the Sage performed in his former lives.'⁸ Haribhaṭṭa follows in the footsteps of Āryaśūra, and regards himself as a *kavi*, though he modestly does not include himself among the 'great poets.'⁹ His modesty is, however, unjustified. When we read Haribhaṭṭa's beautiful descriptions, full of striking images and characterised by a loving attention to the details, we are reminded of the style of Bāṇa, one of the towering figures of Sanskrit literature. In fact, although Bāṇa is rightly thought of as an immensely influential poet, whose art many later poets tried to emulate, his prose style probably did not arise from nowhere, and in fact its beginnings can be observed in Haribhaṭṭa's *kāvya*.

2. Referentiality and localisation

Although Kumāralāta's work also contains stories set in the time of the Buddha (e.g. 43: the Buddha converts an outcast, 47: the conversion of Upāli, 57: the Buddha and Śāriputra, 62: the Buddha and Anāthapiṇḍada's maid-servant) and well-known classical *jātakas* (e.g. 64: *Śibijātaka*, 69: *Ṣaḍdantajātaka*, 70: *Mrgajātaka*), most of the stories, as Loukota Sanclemente observed, 'appear to be pieces of original Buddhist fiction set in contemporary times, as suggested by the mention of attested historical characters like king Huviṣka and his father Kaniṣka and by the fact that the locations of the stories are often not taken from the narratives of the Buddha's life and are

direct object (*karmaṇi*), and the *-ka-* suffix used either in the sense of 'little' (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.3.85: *alpe*) or expressing sympathy (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.3.76: *anukampāyām*).

⁷ Lüders 1926, 204. Similarly in the introduction of Story 64 (as reconstructed by Loukota Sanclemente): *tadyathā kapotasya darśanam udāharanti yad asmābhiḥ svakalpanālaṃkṛtam evaṃ abhidhīyamānaṃ śobbheta* (Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 348).

⁸ ĀJM 1.1 (Hanisch 2005, 2).

⁹ Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā*, Introduction, vv. 3, 7 (Straube 2019, 41–42).

instead toponyms of the northwestern area of the Indian world, of Kumāralāta's native Gandhāra' (Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 6). Loukota Sanclemente also holds that '[t]he vivid portrayal of contemporary society ... makes the text especially suitable for analysis from the point of view of social history' (Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 6–7). Of course this does not mean that one should read Kumāralāta's literary work as sociography: it is after all fiction, with a pronounced bias towards Buddhism. Nevertheless, thanks to the marked referentiality of many stories, the author's contemporary audience could recognise the conditions of their own times (or of the recent past) and their own region (North India and Greater Gandhāra) in the work and feel that it was about them.

Among the spatial settings of Kumāralāta's stories, we find the following north-western locations: Takṣaśilā (Taxila, *passim*), Suvastu (Swat, Stories 9 and 34), Śākala (Sialkot, Story 8), Puṣkalāvati (Charsadda, Story 31), and Vajrapura (Bajaur, Story 90). Localities of North India also appear, e.g. Ma-thurā (Stories 1 and 74) and Kusumapura (Pāṭaliputra, Story 2). China and Rome are mentioned: the former in Story 45 about a Chinese prince visiting Taxila, and the latter in Story 90 about a merchant from Vajrapura who made a fortune by trading with the Roman empire (Daqin in the Chinese translation). As for the temporal settings of the stories, many are contemporaneous with the author, or set in the not-too-distant past: the famous Kuṣāṇa kings Kaniṣka and Huviṣka are the protagonists of three stories (the former in Stories 14 and 31, the latter in Story 73).¹⁰

The closing sections of some stories fulfil the role of localisation by connecting the narrative with a particular place in the here-and-now of the author and his contemporary audience. For example, Story 79 closes with the following lines: 'So the king immediately went to the place where the *stūpa* had stopped and prepared a great offering. The name of this *stūpa* is now Ziyi ('moving by itself'). The *stūpa* with the tree and the well is thirty *li* away

¹⁰ Huviṣka is portrayed as a follower of Mahāyāna in a fourth-century manuscript fragment preserved in the Schøyen Collection (Salomon 2002). KD 73 has a parallel in the Chinese *avadāna* compilation *Za bao zang jing* (dated 473 CE, it is based on Indian materials), in which, however, the king is Prasenajit of Kosala (Willemen 1994, 63–64; see Neelis 2011, 141). Could it be that Kumāralāta reset the story to his own historical period? Or was it the other way round? The translator of the Chinese compilation, called Kikkāya, may have come from the north-west of the Subcontinent, and the text contains many parables set in Gandhāra and Kāśmīr (Willemen 1994, 2–3). Its Parable 42 about Khāṇu, a painter from Gandhāra, corresponds to Story 21 of the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapaṅkti*.

from the town of Pijja’ (Huber 1908, 446). Even in the case of the famous *Mṛgajāta* (Story 70), the story closes with an aetiological explanation of the name of the Deer Park (Mṛgadāva) near Benares (king Brahmadatta is speaking): ‘All these forests and woods, all these springs and ponds, I give them to the deer; I forbid them to be harmed. That is why this forest will be called the “Forest given to the Deer”’ (Huber 1908, 416).¹¹

Such localisations are absent from the *Jātakamālās* of Āryaśūra and Haribhaṭṭa. Their stories are set in an unspecified past, at the same locations as their source stories. In some *jātakas* the setting is not specified at all (e.g. HJM 3, ĀJM 8; in ĀJM 18 even the Bodhisattva is anonymous), or it is referred to with expressions such as *kvacin / anyatamasmin nagaravare*, ‘in a certain royal city’ (HJM 27 and 29). Haribhaṭṭa also included the *jātaka* about the deer king in his collection (no. 11), but unlike Kumāralāta, he does not connect the famous Mṛgadāva with the story. HJM 5 is the story of king Candraprabha’s self-decapitation, which happened in Takṣaśilā. As we know from Xuanzang, Aśoka built a *stūpa* at the place of Candraprabha’s self-sacrifice, and Kumāralāta wrote his scholarly works in the monastery beside this *stūpa* (Li 1996, 81). Haribhaṭṭa makes no reference to any of these local details.

In its constitution, Kumāralāta’s collection follows the tradition of the Gāndhārī *avadāna*- and *pūrvayoga*-type texts transmitted in Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts from the early centuries CE. As Salomon observed, many of these Gāndhārī *avadānas* ‘do not consist of stories illustrating the karmic results of actions in previous lives. Rather, the term *avadāna* is apparently being used here in something more like its broader, and not exclusively Buddhist, sense of “pious legend” or “great deed”. In general, the *avadānas* in these texts seem to fall into two classes: those that concern well-known traditional figures of the time of the Buddha Śākyamuni and those that seem to be set in the contemporary world of Indo-Scythian Gandhāra.’¹² In the British Library collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, two stories refer to contemporary historical figures. Avadāna 5 features the *kṣatrapa* (Satrap) Jihoniga, who is known from a Taxila silver vase inscription (*jihonika*) and

¹¹ English translation of Huber’s French translation.

¹² Salomon 1999, 37. See also Neelis 2008, 153: ‘Avadānas in Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts include narratives about early followers and patrons of Śākyamuni Buddha in northeastern India and contemporary local figures from the northwestern borderlands between modern northwestern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan (ancient Gandhāra). Toponyms, proper names and titles of characters in avadānas place the British Library Kharoṣṭhī manuscript fragments in specific geographical and historical contexts.’

coin legends (ΖΕΙΩΝΙΣΗΣ / *jihunia*), and can probably be dated to the first quarter of the first century CE (Lenz 2010, 96–97; Salomon 1999, 142). Avadāna 7 is about Zadamitra (an Indianisation of the Middle Iranian name Zād(ə)mihr), a Śaka official, who addresses a *kṣabura*, a name or title related to the Middle Persian word *šā(b)bubr*, ‘son of the king.’¹³ Avadāna 8 is about the same Zadamitra and Áspavarman, whom the text probably calls *stra[d]*(**egeno*), that is στρατηγός, ‘commander,’ and who is probably the same as the Áspavarma *stratega* of a Taxila saucer inscription and numerous coins, the son of the Apraca king Indravarman who ruled in Bajaur and can be dated to the beginning of the first century CE.¹⁴

As Neelis observed, ‘[a]vadānas that incorporated local rulers and other officials were probably intended to acknowledge and encourage patronage by extolling the generosity of supporters and by criticizing the shortcomings of opponents of their supporters. Stories with contemporary regional settings were also likely to have been composed for local audiences in order to convey the relevance of the main points of the narrative more directly’ (Neelis 2008, 159). Salomon pointed out that ‘[t]he references to Jihonika and Áspavarman are presumably no different in principle from the glorification of better-known royal patrons like Áśoka and Kaniška in north Indian Buddhist literature’ (Salomon 1999, 150). In fact, Avadāna 4 in the same collection is about King Áśoka and the women of his harem (Lenz 2013, 56–58), a story Kumāralāta also included in his *Drṣṭāntapañkti* (no. 30). Kumāralāta wrote his *kāvya* about 150–200 years after the Gandhāran *avadānika*, in the Kuṣāṇa kingdom, which explains his encomia of Kaniška and Huviška. However, he also refers to local rulers, who are more difficult to identify on the basis of the Chinese translation, e.g. Story 77 features a king of Shijialuo (= Śākala, Sialkot) called Lutoutuomo in Chinese, which Huber tentatively Sanskritised as Rudradāman (Huber 1908, 437).

The Gāndhārī *avadānas* do not aspire to be listened to as poetry. Their style is rather unpolished and compact, even terse. The British Library *avadāna* manuscripts appear to have been written by a single person, named ‘Big Hand’ by the editors, who was probably both the author and the scribe

¹³ Lenz 2010, 82–84. On *kṣabura* see Schoubben 2022.

¹⁴ Lenz 2010, 85–93; Salomon 1999, 145–149; Neelis 2007, 72, 79. Among the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments, the second *avadāna* has two characters from Puṣkalāvātī (Charsadda, the primary urban centre of Gandhāra in the Śaka period), one of whom is a *kṣatrapa* called Spaduka (another name of Iranian origin, see Neelis 2008, 159). The third *avadāna* in the same group is about the father of king Kardamaga, a name that can be related to the Western Kṣatrapa Kārdamaka lineage (Neelis 2008, 160).

of these Gāndhārī texts. Lenz speculates that ‘Big Hand’ might have been a young monk ‘studying to become a specialist in this type of literature. ... [H]is texts ... represent a unique collection of *avadāna*-type stories written by a student who is studying to become an *avadāna* specialist, that is to say, an *avadānist* [*avadānika*]’ (Lenz 2004, 207).

Kumāralāta, a native of Greater Gandhāra, probably knew such *avadānikas* (in fact he was a master of the genre himself), and he was well acquainted with such Buddhist anthologies of educational stories, including classical *jātakas* and *avadānas*, but also moral tales featuring locations, characters and circumstances familiar to the contemporary audience. Kumāralāta’s innovation was that he made these stories beautiful using poetic ornamentation, in other words he adopted and adapted them for *kāvya*. Such historical figures as Aśoka, Kaniṣka, Huviṣka and the king of Śākala appear as characters in fictional stories, they become part of the fictional world, their deeds illustrate Buddhist moral principles. Kumāralāta is not engaged in giving a historical account of the life events of these rulers. But how was Kumāralāta’s work received by the audience of his time? Again, the moral and aesthetic content was probably more important for them than historical factuality. However, the authenticity of the ethical lessons might have been corroborated by the fact that they were exemplified by the exploits of historical figures of the not too distant past, whose memory was alive among the people. And more than that, some of Kumāralāta’s stories were anchored to landmarks such as *stūpas*, a visible part of the everyday reality of the audience. Due to such anchoring, people of the region could regard these stories as ‘theirs,’ as stories of their past, as part of their own ‘history.’

Āryaśūra followed Kumāralāta in using the same prosimetric *kāvya* style and the same narrative structure (moral aphorism + *tadyathānuśrūyate* + story that illustrates the aphorism), but he was writing a *jātakamālā* and not a *dr̥ṣṭāntapañkti*, therefore his stories are well-known Buddhist legends, set in an unspecified past, often at unnamed locations and with the nameless Bodhisattva as the protagonist. Haribhaṭṭa followed the example set by Āryaśūra: he also composed a *jātakamālā*. He probably came from the north-west, and some of his stories take place in (and most probably originated from) Greater Gandhāra: *Jātaka* 5 is set in Takṣaśilā and *Jātaka* 6 in Puṣkalāvati. But these stories also underwent a certain degree of *sādhārāṇīkaraṇa*, ‘generalisation’: they could be set in any city (no present sight is identified that would evoke the memory of the event), and are moved to an undetermined, legendary past.¹⁵ In this way the ‘anchoring’ to familiar loca-

¹⁵ The influence of Kumāralāta on the authors of the *Jātakamālās* deserves further research, see Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 143–144.

tions, landmarks and historical persons that we see in the *Dṛṣṭāntapañkti* is lost, but, on the other hand, a greater degree of universality is achieved. The stories of the *jātakamālās* are often not connected with the historical or legendary past of a particular region, but to the shared past of mankind (or at least to that part of mankind which belongs to the Indian cultural sphere). In this way anyone, living anywhere in the Sanskrit-knowing world, could respond to them on a shared cultural level. This is of course also true to a certain extent about Kumāralāta's stories, but their author imbued many of them with a local, distinctly Gandharan flavour. Perhaps we can observe a gradual process of universalisation here. First, there are the Gāndhārī *avadānas*, many of which are local stories, composed in a local language. Kumāralāta chose Sanskrit, a language understood much more widely than Gāndhārī, and the idiom of *kāvya*, shared by many both inside and outside the Gandharan cultural sphere, nevertheless many of his stories are still anchored to the north-west. Āryaśūra continued writing Buddhist stories in Sanskrit and *kāvya* style, but made their contents more general, less localised; in fact his *jātakas* belong to the pan-Indian heritage of Buddhism. Haribhaṭṭa followed in the footsteps of Āryaśūra, and even though he probably hailed from the north-west (perhaps from Kashmir) and also adapted local stories, his collection is, for the most part, cleared of specific spatial, temporal, or personal references.

3. *Preaching and preachers*

Another aspect of inquiry into the historical context of these early Buddhist narrative *kāvyas* is the question of how they were used. Who recited them, who listened to them, and what were the circumstances of such presentations? Fortunately we can form a picture about these details from the three prosimetric *kāvyas* themselves, if we examine the passages that concern the figure of the *dhārmakathika*, the Buddhist preacher, and the scenes in which such preachers or other characters deliver homilies. Such scenes are certainly not realistic in every detail. Miracles are often associated with sermonising, and preachers often appear as miracle makers. In fact, both homilies and miracles aim at awakening faith in the Buddha's teaching. On the other hand, the circumstances of preaching, its location and occasion, and the composition of the audience are all such aspects of these stories which must have appeared credible and verisimilar to contemporary audiences.

Haribhaṭṭa says the following in the introduction of his *Jātakamālā*:

*dhārmakathiko hy ārṣasūtram anuvarṇya paścād
bodhisattvajātakānuvarṇanayā citrabhavanam iva pradīpaprabhayā
sutarām uddiyotayati, śrotrjanasya ca manasy adbhikāṃ prītim utpādayati.*
(Straube 2019, 42)

A preacher first expounds a saying of the Buddha[;] then, as if lighting up a picture gallery with a lamp, illuminates it further by recounting a *jātaka* of the Bodhisattva, and thereby fills the minds of his audience with enormous joy. (tr. Khoroché 2017, 10)

The *jātaka* collections, including the *kāvya*-style *jātakamālās* like Haribhaṭṭa's, were part of the preacher's (*dhārmakathika*) toolkit. He used them in his sermons to illustrate the Buddha's teachings, conjuring lively scenes with words, somewhat like the wandering performers who showed paintings, *yamapaṭas* and *saṃsārācakraṭas*, to illustrate the sufferings in hell and the miseries of life.¹⁶ Such images, verbal or visual, certainly had an aesthetic value, and the *jātaka* stories, as Haribhaṭṭa says, elicited pleasure (*prīti*) in the hearts of the audience, which was also considered to be one of the major goals of *kāvya*.¹⁷

Dhārmakathikas also feature in inscriptions from the centuries around the beginning of the common era. In an inscription from Mathurā, a *dharmakathika* [sic] monk called Dharmadatta appears as the donor (Lüders 1961, 72), while in a *kharoṣṭhī* copper-plate inscription dated to the reign of Kanīṣka the *dharmakathī* [sic] monk Nagadata is credited with the inauguration ceremony of a *stūpa* (Konow 1929, 140). In a Sanchi inscription we read about a *dharmakathika* [sic] called Aya-Cuḍa, whose pupil, *atevāsīn* (Sanskrit *antevāsīn*), called Balamitra, made a donation.¹⁸

¹⁶ For a *yamapaṭika*, see e.g. *Harṣacarita* 5 (Führer 1909, 214), for a *cittavaḍo* (a painting on a cloth) depicting the *saṃsārācakka* (the wheel of existence) shown by an *uvajjhāo* (preceptor), see *Kuvalayamālā* (Upadhye 1959, 185). Stories of the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* *Drṣṭāntapaṅkti*, Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* and Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* were illustrated in paintings: the *Śaddantajātaka* fresco in Ajantā was based either on KD 70 or HJM 19 (see Schlingloff 1988, 122; Hahn 2011, 57–58); a fresco from the so-called Rotkuppelhöhle in Qizil depicts a scene from KD 20 (Lüders 1926, 132–133; Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 1); Āryaśūra's verses are actually quoted in Ajanta (Lüders 1902), and the depictions of several *jātakas* are based on Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* (Schlingloff 1988, 143–156).

¹⁷ Cf. Bhāmaha's *Kāvya-lamkāra* 1.2 and many other texts on poetics.

¹⁸ Marshall, Foucher, Majumdar 1982, 342. (Pl. 134, 'South Gate,' 2. On the middle architrave, outside).

Recently Péter-Dániel Szántó identified a ‘Buddhist preachers’ manual,’ surviving in a single palm-leaf manuscript, which was written in the north-eastern part of the Subcontinent but preserved in Tibet, where it was photographed by Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana and Giuseppe Tucci. Using this set of (often painfully blurred) photographs, Szántó embarked on editing the text, and has published two chapters so far: one on grief and one on gambling.¹⁹ As Szántó writes, the **Saddharmaparikathā* (his reconstruction of the title) ‘can be best described as a practical handbook of Buddhist homiletics. It is not a theoretical guide, since it is not about the way sermons are to be constructed or delivered. Instead, the author aims to give a series of templates for the actual sermons’ (Szántó 2021, 295). There are many quotations in the work, and both Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* and Kumāralāta’s *Dr̥ṣṭāntapañkti* are frequently referred to as texts from which the preacher (*dhārmakathika*)²⁰ should recite stories to illustrate the moral of the homily. Haribhaṭṭa’s *Jātakamālā* is not mentioned, perhaps because the **Saddharmaparikathā* predates Haribhaṭṭa.

3.1 Generating *prasāda* by visual and verbal means

The function of these homilies (*parikathāḥ*, *dharmyāḥ kathāḥ*) was to furnish the audience with the ‘relish of *prasāda*’ (*prasādāsvāda*), so that they become calm and full of expectation, and thus fit for the Buddha’s teaching.²¹ *Prasāda* is an important and multivalent term in Indian Buddhism. As Rupert Gethin notes, it ‘conveys at the same time notions of a state of mental composure, serenity, clarity or purity, and trust.’²² Schopen, discussing the term *abhiprasanna* in Buddhist stories, takes it to mean ‘very pleased, gratified, greatly affected, deeply moved’ (Schopen 2004, 229, 252n39). For the author of the **Saddharmaparikathā*, the psychological meaning of *prasad* is close to its primary, physical meaning, namely ‘to settle (like waters

¹⁹ Szántó 2021 and Szántó 2022. I am grateful to Szántó for sharing the manuscript images and his transcript of the whole text with me. In the following I am going to quote the **Saddharmaparikathā* from Szántó’s transcript.

²⁰ The **Saddharmaparikathā* calls the person for whose use this manual was intended a *dhārmakathika*, and his sermons *dharmyāḥ kathāḥ* in the first sentence of Chapter 10.

²¹ **Saddharmaparikathā* 1.5: *labdhaprasādāsvādā hi pariṣat kathayā yayā | pāṭribhavati dharmasya praśamastimitonmukhī ||*.

²² Gethin 1992, 112. See also Rotman 2008, 65–150.

after the monsoon rains): *prasanneṣu tu citteṣu śāradeṣu saraḥsv iva | dharmajyotsnā bhavaty eva śreyāḥkumudabodhanī* (1.9) ‘But in serene / untroubled minds, Dharma awakens the highest good, just as moonlight awakens the lilies in autumn lakes.’

In Buddhist stories *prasāda* is often generated by visual experience, especially by *pratyekabuddhas* performing miracles (Rotman 2008, 68): a good example is the *Mūlikajātaka* (no. 24) in Haribhaṭṭa’s *Jātakamālā*.²³ The connection between the miraculous vision (*prātibhāryadarśana*) of a person endowed with the six super-knowledges (*ṣaḍabhiñña*, usually a Buddha) and the emergence of *abhiprasāda* (in this case ‘trust’ or ‘faith’) in the Buddha’s teaching is also made in inscriptions, e.g. concerning the Viṣṇukunḍin king Govindavarman from the fifth century CE (Tournier 2018, 34–35). The Bodhisattva’s superhuman deeds also give rise to *prasāda*: in ĀJM 8 Maitrībala feeds his own flesh to the *yakṣas*, who ‘were deeply moved and full of wonder,’ ‘thrilled with intense emotion,’ and ‘their hearts had melted with devotion’ (*prasādam viśmayam copajagmuḥ, prasādasambarṣitatanurubāḥ, prasādamṛdukṛtahrdayān*, translations by Khoroché; Hanisch 2005, 70, 72, 73; Khoroché 1989, 55–56).

Miracles involving inanimate objects can also bring about *prasāda*. In KD 31, Kaniṣka worships a *stūpa* he thinks to be Buddhist. The *stūpa* then miraculously breaks into pieces, and a man from the nearby village tells the king that this was a *stūpa* of the *nirgranthas*. Kaniṣka declares that even the insentient wood and stones of a *stūpa* are clear testimony to the imperfectness of the *nirgrantha* doctrine and the truth of the omniscient Buddha’s wise words (*sarvajñasya subhāsitam*). The people around the king, who have witnessed this miracle, ‘had their eyes and faces flushed with intense emotion / faith’ (*prasādanetanetramukharāgā*; Huber 1908, 158–163; Lüders 1926, 154). As well as miracles, witnessing meritorious deeds can also generate *prasāda*. In KD 22, when a beggar girl ‘saw that a great number of people (or respectable people) were intent on making a donation, devotion / good intention was born in her’ (*mahājanaṃ ca pradānābhīmukham avekṣya jātaprasādā*), and she gave away her only two copper coins (Huber 1908, 119–123; Lüders 1926, 149).²⁴

Not just visionary experiences, but words can also give rise to *prasāda*. In HJM 1.35, the king hears the word ‘Buddha’ from his mahout, and ‘his devo-

²³ Straube 2019, 277: *atha sa pratyekajino bodhisattvasya dviguṇataraprasādajananārtham ambaratalam utpatya tat tat prātibhāryam adarśayat*.

²⁴ Loukota Sanclemente examines the usage of *prasāda* and related expressions in the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapañkti* (see Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 262–275).

tion / good feelings seem to be multiplied by his horripilation’ (*bahutvam iva samprāptaḥ prasādaḥ pulakodgamaiḥ*; Straube 2019, 52). In HJM 4.15, the Bodhisattva hare says to the ascetic: ‘the fine sayings of the wise bring about the clarity / serenity of the mind’ (*manahprasādaṃ janayat ... sudhīyāṃ subhāṣitaṃ*; Straube 2019, 84). In HJM 32, the Bodhisattva lion instructs the vulture not to commit a wrong that would consign him to hell, and ‘the Bodhisattva’s sermon clears / calms down the vulture’s mind’ (*grdhro bodhisattvadharmadeśanāprasāditamatir*; Straube 2019, 392). Haribhaṭṭa concludes several *jātakas* with sentences such as *iti vicintya buddhe bhagavati paraḥ prasādaḥ karaṇīya iti*, ‘reflecting on this [i.e. the moral of the preceding story] one should place one’s supreme faith in the blessed Buddha’ (Straube 2019, 125). Thus we see that listening to a dharmic teaching or to an edifying story of a Bodhisattva can also increase our *prasāda*.

Sometimes miracles are combined with preaching in these stories. In HJM 3 we read that the Bodhisattva Dharmakāma was ready to enter the fire in exchange for a *subhāṣita*, ‘wise saying.’ Before doing so, he ‘preached a sermon (*dharmadeśanā*) to the gathered crowd in which he set forth the virtues of wise sayings’ (Straube 2019, 71; translation in Khoroché 2017, 28). Then, making a public vow (*praṇidhi*) to reach the state of a Buddha with this meritorious act, he jumped into the flames. But the fire was immediately transformed into a lotus pond, and Dharmakāma found himself sitting on a lotus: a great miracle! Then, ‘[g]lad at heart the Bodhisattva’s friends, relatives, and dependents watched him as he delivered a sermon (*dharmyāṃ kathāṃ*) urging upon them generosity, moral awareness, and the other prime virtues’ (Straube 2019, 76; translation in Khoroché 2017, 31). The lesson of this story is formulated by Haribhaṭṭa as follows: ‘So then, the Lord, a connoisseur of pearls of wisdom, was ready to barter even his life for some wise words. Ever mindful of this, the wise man, who wants to put an end to his sorrows, should make every effort to listen to sermons (*dharmakathāśravaṇe*)’ (Straube 2019, 79; translation in Khoroché 2017, 32). Although Dharmakāma is not a professional preacher in the story, he also introduces his sermon with a miracle, thus securing the admiration and rapt attention of his audience. The *subhāṣita*, ‘well-spoken verse,’ for which he is ready to sacrifice his life, is not particularly poetic, but rather simple (verse 22): *pradānapaṭubhir nityaṃ śīle ca vimale sthitaiḥ | atyantavīryasamṇābhaiḥ prāpyate padam akṣayam ||* ‘Those who are ever intent on giving, who remain morally pure, who arm themselves with boundless valor—they reach the imperishable state’ (translation Khoroché 2017, 29). As Phyllis Granoff observed about such stanzas, ‘[the verse’s] meaning seems so obvious that it is hard to believe that this was the object for which the future Buddha was

willing to die. Surely something else must be at stake, and we are told in a modest way what that something might be: somehow, the encounter and the verse purify the seeker' (Granoff 1991–1992, 146). As Dharmakāma describes the transformative effect of a *subhāṣita* (verse 19): *yatrodite vimaladhāmni vivasvatīva pumnām matiḥ kamalinīva vibodham eti* | 'When it shines out like the pure-rayed sun, men's minds awaken like lotuses on a pond' (translation Khoroché 2017, 29).

Another example of the combination of preaching and miracle is KD 45. In this story, hearing a monk's recitation of the *sūtra* of the twelve *nidānas*, the audience sheds tears: these collected tears miraculously cure a Chinese prince's eye disease. The happy prince listens to the exposition of Dharma and as a result becomes 'one who has entered the stream' (*srotaāpanna*). The monk praises the Dharma, thanks to which 'even a feeble-minded barbarian is awakened' (*krśamatir mleccho 'pi sambudhyate*; Huber 1908, 216; Lüders 1926, 161).

3.2 The inclusion of stories in the homilies of the **Saddharmaparikathā*

As we have seen above, Haribhaṭṭa composed his *Jātakamālā* with a preacher in mind, who illustrates the Buddha's teaching with beautiful stories and 'thereby fills the minds of the audience with enormous joy (*prīti*)' (Straube 2019, 42; Khoroché 2017, 10). Āryaśūra says he has worshipped the wonderful deeds of the Bodhisattva with his *kāvya* (i.e. he has composed his *Jātakamālā*) 'so that even the hard-headed may have serenity / faith / deep emotions (*prasāda*) and sermons (*dharmyāḥ kathāḥ*) may become more enjoyable.'²⁵ As the **Saddharmaparikathā* amply illustrates, this is exactly the way Āryaśūras *jātakas* were used by preachers.

The **Saddharmaparikathā* mentions five stories from the *Kalpānāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapaṅkti* by name, to be told by the preacher as illustrations of specific topics.²⁶ The *Paṇadvayadrṣṭānta* (KD 22) and the *Āśīviṣadrṣṭānta* (KD 34) are mentioned in Chapter 3 on charity: the first is a 'pious legend' with an unnamed beggar girl as the protagonist, set at an unspecified time and place, while the second one is a story set in the Buddha's time in Śrāvastī. The *Vyāghrabhīṣitakadrṣṭānta* (KD 57), a story also set in the Buddha's time, is referenced in Chapter 8 on icons. The *Kavāṭabhitti-*

²⁵ ĀJM 1.2 (Hanisch 2005, 2): *syād eva rūkṣamanasām api ca prasādo dharmyāḥ kathāś ca ramaṇīyataratvam īyuh*.

²⁶ The titles occur in sentences like, *atra X-drṣṭāntam uktvā vācyam*.

dr̥ṣṭānta (probably KD 4)²⁷ is mentioned in Chapter 11 on grief, it is again a ‘pious legend’ set in ‘the kingdom of the lion,’ i.e. probably Siṃhala (Ceylon), under an anonymous king at an unspecified time. Finally the *Bālbhikadr̥ṣṭānta* (KD 24) comes up in Chapter 14 on self-immolation; it is about a man from Bactria (*bālbhika*) who goes to Madhyadeśa where he is appointed a ‘village headman.’ As we can see, the author of the **Saddharmaparīkathā* selected such stories from the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Dr̥ṣṭānta-paṅkti* which are either legends about the Śākyamuni Buddha, or their localisation in time and space is rather vague. Only KD 24 has a link with the north-west inasmuch as the protagonist originally comes from Bactria, but the story itself is set somewhere on the Gangetic plain.

Many more of Āryaśūra’s *jātakas* are referenced in the **Saddharmaparīkathā*,²⁸ and as Szántó has observed, ‘the work is imbued with Āryaśūra’s diction and imagery, so much so that one might suspect that the author was, at least in a spiritual sense, a disciple of the famous poet’ (Szántó 2021, 301). Szántó places the **Saddharmaparīkathā* in the fifth century CE at the latest, and remarks that ‘there are no traces whatsoever which would allow us to localise him on the Indian Subcontinent (which is probably consistent with the author’s wishes)’ (Szántó 2021, 302). Āryaśūra’s *jātakas* probably suited better the universalising style of this preacher’s guidebook than Kumāralāta’s more distinctly Gāndhāran and Kuṣāṇa-related stories.

3.3 Sermonising in Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā*

In Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* we often encounter the Bodhisattva delivering sermons. In ĀJM 19, seven Brahman brothers and their sister settle in a grove to lead the life of hermits. One of the brothers, the Bodhisattva, teaches them every fifth day: ‘He was preaching them various sermons (*dharmyāṃ kathāṃ*) that had the marks of calmness and serenity (*prasāda*).’²⁹ Accord-

²⁷ Szántó could not find this title among Kumāralāta’s parables and translated it ‘the Parable of the Door and the Wall’ (Szántó 2021, 316). KD 4 is about a thief who steals a pearl that is attached to what Huber translates from the Chinese as ‘pilier de la porte du stūpa’ (Huber 1905, 32), but which might have been the *kavāṭa* in the original. The thief falls from this ‘pilier de la porte’ and breaks his leg, which is reflected by the *bhitti* of the title. The moral of the story is that one should use one’s life well and do good, which is exactly the lesson of the **Saddharmaparīkathā* passage where this story is inserted.

²⁸ See Szántó 2021, 300n16.

²⁹ For example, ĀJM 19.7+ (Meiland 2009, vol. I, 434): *upaśamaprasādapaddhatiṃ*

ing to ĀJM 23, the Bodhisattva once was a wandering ascetic, who became the guest of a king, and ‘every day favoured him with sermons (*dharmyābhiḥ kathābhiḥ*) that delighted his ears and his heart, thus making him enter the path leading to the best state.’³⁰ In ĀJM 28, the Bodhisattva is an ascetic who lives in a forest, which he transforms into a veritable ashram (*tapovana*) by his presence. There he is not only revered by forest deities, but also visited by people who desired the best state (*śreyas*) and who were fond of virtues. ‘He greatly favoured that crowd of people with sermons (*dharmyābhiḥ kathābhiḥ*) about forbearance, which delighted both their ears and their hearts.’³¹ In all of these stories the Bodhisattva, who delivers the homilies, is a renouncer, and his audience consists of either his fellow ascetics, or laypeople visiting his abode in the forest for teaching, or the king in whose palace the Bodhisattva is staying as an honoured guest.

3.4 *Dhārmakathikas in Kumāralāta’s Drṣṭāntapaṅkti*

In Kumāralāta’s work the professional preacher (*dhārmakathika*) becomes the protagonist of some stories, and the circumstances of sermonising are often similar to what we see in the *Jātakamālās*. KD 30 is about a preacher monk and one of King Aśoka’s concubines (Huber 1908, 150–157). When King Aśoka had obtained faith (*pratilabdhāyām śraddhāyām*; Lüders 1926, 191), he repeatedly invited monks to his palace, where he made them offerings, and there he listened daily to the Dharma. He had a curtain spread which sheltered his women, who also listened to the Law. Because these women were strongly attached to worldly pleasures, the monks who explained the Law limited themselves to preaching about charity and heaven (*viśayārāmatām eva strīṇām avetya dānakathāṃ svargakathāṃ ca kurvanti sma*; Lüders 1926, 191).³² One of the concubines, however, wanted to hear more: she pushed aside the curtain and asked the preacher (*dhārma-*

tām tām dharmyāṃ kathāṃ cakāra.

³⁰ ĀJM 23.2+ (Meiland 2009, vol. II, 84): *bodhisattvo ’pi cainam śrutihṛdayabhlādinībhīr dharmyābhiḥ kathābhiḥ śreyomārgam anupratipādayamānaḥ pratyaham anujagrāha.*

³¹ ĀJM 28.4+ (Meiland 2009, vol. II, 230): *kṣāntipratisaṃyuktābhiḥ śrutihṛdayabhlādinībhīr dharmyābhiḥ kathābhiḥ tasya janakāyasya param anugrahaṃ cakāra.*

³² This story is also found among the Gāndhārī *avadānas* (Lenz 2013, 56–57), there the sermon is called *dharmadeśano*, and the monk is said to describe heaven (*spargaṇo varṇo bhaṣayadi*).

kathikam uvāca; Lüders 1926, 191) if there was anything more in the Buddha's teaching. The monk taught her the Four Truths of the Noble One, 'causing vast pleasure' in her heart (*vīpulām utpādayan prītim*; Lüders 1926, 152–153), and as a result she became *śrotaāpannā*. Learning what happened, the king had even greater faith (*prasanna*; Lüders 1926, 153) in the Buddhist Dharma.

KD 77 (Huber 1908, 437–444) features King Rudradāman (?) of Śākala, who often went to a Buddhist monastery to listen to the Dharma. One day the preacher (*dhārmakathika*; Lüders 1926, 188) taught about the sins arising from drinking wine and pointed out the heretics (*tīrthyas*) present as prime examples. Then he delivered a long lecture against Brahmanical customs and rules, such as self-immolation, prohibition of selling salt and meat, and touching the water of the Ganges. When they heard his sermon, many heretics renounced the world.³³

KD 20 (Huber 1908, 105–116) is a story about a preacher and a courtesan. The preacher was a *śaḍabhiñña*, that is, he possessed the six super-knowledges (a superior faculty that allows one to perform miracles; Tournier 2018, 34), he could respond appropriately and quickly (*yuktamuktapratibhāṇaḥ*), he was acquainted with his own tradition and those of others (*svasamayaparasamayajñāḥ*), and he was skilled in asking questions and counter-questions (*praśnapratipraśna ...*; Lüders 1926, 204).³⁴ When he explained the Dharma, he filled every heart with joy. He dispelled the darkness of ignorance with his radiance, so that all the people inside and outside the city came daily to listen to his preaching. One day he mounted a high seat and started speaking with the following two verses, which, as Lüders pointed out, were borrowed into the *Pāṃśuśūpradānāvadāna* of the *Divyāvadāna*:³⁵

³³ **Saddharmaparīkathā* 5.10 is a sermon about abstinence from drinking wine (*madyapānavirati*), incorporating the famous *Kumbhajātaka* (ĀJM 17), chapter 12 is about the futility of bathing at *tīrthas*, and chapter 13 is about the futility of self-immolation (Szántó 2021, 297).

³⁴ For other texts characterising *dhārmakathikas* as *yuktamuktapratibhāṇas*, see Drewes 2006, 227. On the interpretation of the term *yuktamuktapratibhāṇa*, see La Vallée Poussin 1925, 91.

³⁵ Lüders 1926, 148 (quoting Cowell and Neil 1886, 363, lines 23–26, with emendations), corresponding (roughly) to Huber 1908, 106, line 35–107, line 6.

*mām prati na tena śakyam śimhāsanam aviduṣā samabhiroḍhum |
yaḥ śimhāsanasaṁsthō mṛga iva sa hi yāti saṁkocam ||
śimha iva yas tu nirbhīr ninadati paravādidarpanāśārtham |
śimhāsanam abhiroḍhum sa kathikasimho bhavati yogyaḥ ||*

In my opinion a man who is not wise cannot mount the lion-throne. The one who sits on the lion-throne like a deer, cowers in fear. But someone who roars fearlessly like a lion to smash the pride of rival disputants, that preacher-lion is suited to mount the lion-throne.

Then he set about delivering a sermon. But suddenly a beautiful courtesan (*gaṇikādarikā*; Lüders 1926, 148) appeared in the crowd. Her attendants pointed out her charms to the men, whose hearts became troubled. The preacher was shocked, and admonished the men to practice good deeds because death comes as swiftly as a galloping horse. But the men lost all modesty, and their hearts were overcome with desire for the courtesan. Then the preacher entered into *samādhi* and realised that the courtesan had come to stir up trouble. He showed himself furious (although he was of course free from anger) and transformed the courtesan into a living skeleton. The men in the crowd felt disgust and they realised the truth of the Buddha's words: 'all conditions (*dharmas*) are like illusions, like magic, like bubbles, like base metal covered in gold.' The courtesan repented and asked the preacher to lift the curse, and he restored the woman to the body she had had before. Then he exhorted the crowd to renounce desire and become serene. As a result, some became *srotaāpannas*, others *anāgāmins* ('who will not return to this world'), others renounced the world and made great efforts until they became *arhats*.

In these stories the preacher is sometimes invited to the royal court (KD 20), where he delivers his homilies to the courtiers as well as to the women of the seraglio, adjusting his sermons to the audience. Such *dānakathās* and *svargakathās*, 'sermons on charity and heaven,' probably included *avadānas* and *jātakas*, as we see in the **Saddharmaparikathā*. Sometimes (KD 77) a king visits the Buddhist monastery, and heretics (i.e. non-Buddhists) are also present in the audience, listening to a homily against drinking alcohol and Brahmanical superstitions (the **Saddharmaparikathā* also contains such sermons). In KD 20, all sorts of townspeople, even children, go to the *vihāra* to listen to the preacher. Szántó's observations, based on the **Saddharmaparikathā*, tally with what we see in these stories: '[S]ome passages suggest that the preacher was not actively seeking out an audience by missionary zeal but rather created such conditions where the audience came to him. (...) [The] sermons are addressed almost exclusively to laypeople,

both Brahmanical and Buddhist. (...) Social standing is very rarely referred to, but one passage suggests that the audience could be headed by some local potentate or even a king. That the audience consisted of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists is very clear' (Szántó 2021, 303–305).

4. Conclusions

The stories of the three Sanskrit Buddhist prosimetric *kāvya*s we studied above serve to illustrate the truth of the apophthegms that introduce them. They are exemplary narratives and were considered just as true as the wise sayings they exemplify. Their standard introductory formula, *tadyathā-nuśrūyate*, 'in line with this, [the following story] has been heard [from an unbroken chain of transmitters],' refers both to their congruity with the wise saying that precedes them, and to their embeddedness in public memory.³⁶

We have seen that Kumāralāta frequently anchors his stories that illustrate the Buddha's teaching to historical persons of the not-too-distant past and to locations of homeland, Greater Gandhāra. These details could contribute to a sense of shared experience, an air of familiarity and plausibility, similarly to the references to empirical verifiability: we see these factors combined in KM 73 about Huviṣka's ministers disagreeing about the workings of karma.³⁷ Āryaśūra and Haribhaṭṭa followed in many respects the way paved by Kumāralāta. As Loukota Sanclemente pointed out, 'these later writers of literary Buddhist *jātakas* in Sanskrit may have found inspiration in Kumāralāta's style and lexical choices, [but] generally the atmosphere of their stories veers towards either the legendary or the idealized, not adhering to the realism and geographical specificity of Kumāralāta's *Garland*' (Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 143). Nevertheless, we also find 'reality elements' contributing to the verisimilitude of these stories especially in Haribhaṭṭa's *jātakas*, in his striking images and attention to details in the descriptions of drought, famine, storm, the cremation ground, or an abandoned village. These vivid descriptions probably also contributed to the audience's impression that they are hearing about events that *could have happened*. On the other hand, the delocalised,

³⁶ Cf. *Jātakamālāṭīkā* (Basu 1989, 247–248): *tadyathāśabdau nidarśanārthe. atra śrūyata iti śrutim avicchinām āha*. Beside the *tadyathānuśrūyate* formula, Kumāralāta also uses *tadyathā X-udāharaṇam udāharanti* in the reworkings of well-known stories (cf. Lüders 1926, 47; Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 347).

³⁷ Cf. Loukota Sanclemente 2019, 199–201.

more widely transmitted stories of the two *Jātakamālās* had the potential of addressing an audience that was wider in space and time. We have also seen that the author of the **Saddharmaparīkathā* drew more upon Śūra's *Jātakamālā* than Kumāralāta's work, possibly (at least partly) because Śūra's stories had a more readily universal applicability.

When we read the **Saddharmaparīkathā* together with the stories about *dhārmakathikas* in the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Drṣṭāntapañkti*, we can form an impression of the character of the Buddhist preacher and his activities in the early centuries CE in the northern part of the Subcontinent. The image we get from Kumāralāta's work is no doubt idealised, yet it contains several historically accurate details, from the locations of preaching to the constitution of the audience. In some stories the preacher monk regularly visits the royal palace to give sermons there to the king and his court. In other stories we see kings and townspeople visiting the monastery to listen to such homilies. The constitution of the audience shows a great deal of variety: we see, among others, royalty, ladies of the harem, merchants, courtesans, non-Buddhists, and even foreigners. In the two *Jātakamālās*, the *bodhisattva*'s preaching is set in similar circumstances. The importance of sermons in generating *prasāda*, 'faith / trust / deep emotions,' is amply demonstrated in the three early narrative *kāvyas*, and the usefulness of embedding good stories in homilies is manifest in the Preacher's Manual.

As the style of these Buddhist legends became more and more artistic in these prosimetric *kāvyas*, perhaps the homilies themselves also became more eloquent and sometimes even poetic, as we see it in the **Saddharmaparīkathā* (Szántó 2021, 308). *Kāvya* was put into the service of homiletics, 'as sweet is put into a bitter medicine to make it drinkable.'³⁸

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³⁸ *Saundarananda* 18.63d: *pātuṃ tiktam ivauśadhaṃ madhuyutaṃ hr̥dyaṃ kathaṃ syād iti* (Johnston 1928, 141; translation in Johnston 1932, 117).

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Liquid swords:
History through allusion
in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*

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1.

In the course of working on a new edition and translation of Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (VADC), I have become increasingly aware of a particular gap between theory and practice in the tradition of Sanskrit *kāvya*. This concerns the nature of literary reference or allusion; by which I mean the conscious borrowing or adaptation of one poet's words or conceptions by another. As any serious reader of *kāvya* knows, this happens all the time: poets alluded at the level of metrical choice, competitively reworked or extended the figures of their predecessors, and incorporated identifiable words and phrases of other poets in stipulable ways. Within Indology, the serious study of such allusive habits can be traced to Jacobi's classic article (1889) on the relationship between Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* and Māgha's *Śīśupālavadha*.

Despite the evident importance of poetic allusion as a practice, however, there were very few efforts by śāstric authors to characterise or theorise it. In the concluding verses to the *Dhvanyāloka*, in the course of his discussion of the inexhaustible nature of literary representation (4.7c: *ānantyam eva vācyasya*), Ānandavardhana touches on what he calls the *saṁvādāḥ* ('concurrences') between different poets. Ānanda then offers a typology of three different sorts of such concurrence, only one of which—where the resem-

blance subserves some element of novelty in the borrowing instance—he found preferable.¹ However, he gives no examples of any of these.

Ānanda's brief account supplied a point of departure for Rājaśekhara's far more extensive account in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters of his *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*.² In a telling contrast to Ānanda's neutral account of *saṃvāda*, Rājaśekhara frames his discussion in terms of *śabda*- and *artha-haraṇa*; the 'taking,' 'seizing' or even 'abduction' of another poet's words or ideas; Stchoupak and Renou neatly capture this when they rendered *haraṇa* as 'emprunt'.³ Much of Rājaśekhara's discussion is about exploring the limits of just how much such *haraṇa* is acceptable before it crosses over into plagiarism or explicit theft, and he appears committed to closely policing this boundary. Adopting Ānanda's three-fold typology and adding a fourth, preferred category to it, Rājaśekhara's account of *haraṇa* concludes with a detailed taxonomy of the different sorts of borrowing poets, furnished with extensive citations and blended with another taxonomy based on Rājaśekhara's own idiosyncratic repurposing of terms for magnets, drawn from the alchemical tradition.⁴ Rājaśekhara's discussion was later integrated into the early *sūtras* of Hemacandra's *Kāvya-anuśāsana*, with yet another change of terminology and emphasis: Hemacandra preferred to speak of *upajīvanam* or 'dependency,' and he accorded it a place in a poet's formation.⁵

¹ *Dhvanyāloka* 4.11–13: *saṃvādās tu bhavanty eva bāhulyena sumedhasām | naikarūpatayā sarve te mantavyā vipaścītā || saṃvādo hy anyasādṛśyaṃ tat punaḥ pratibimbavat | ālekhyākāravat tulyadehivac ca śarīriṇām || tatra pūrvam ananyātma tuchātma tadanantaram | tṛtīyaṃ tu prasiddhātma nānyasāmyaṃ tyajet kaviḥ ||* 'However, there certainly are an abundance of concurrences among clever [poets]: an intelligent critic needs to recognise that there are multiple varieties of these. A concurrence is, simply put, a similarity with something else: it can, however, resemble a reflected image, or an illustrated depiction, or the bodily resemblance between different people. The first of these lacks any essence of its own [in his *vr̥tti*, Ānanda glosses this as *tāttvikaśarīraśūnyaṃ*], the next only possesses a scintilla of such an essence, while the third clearly has its own distinct essence: a poet need not eschew such a resemblance to another[']s work].’ Abhinavagupta's comments here are desultory.

² Ed. Dalal and Shastri, 56–78; it is worth seeking out the third edition (1934) for its extensive explanatory notes (209–228).

³ Stchoupak and Renou 1946, 162–209, the translation and exegetical notes of which can still be read with great profit; Parashar's English rendering (2000) marks an interpretative step backwards.

⁴ See Granoff 2009, 140–142, cautiously drawing her parallels from the *Rasārṇava* while cautioning against it being Rājaśekhara's source; oddly, Granoff renders *ayaskānta* as 'iron' instead of 'magnet.'

⁵ *Kāvya-anuśāsana* 1.10, with the autocommentaries *Alaṃkāracūḍāmaṇi* and *Viveka*

While there was certainly some awareness of the phenomenon of literary allusion among major theorists of Sanskrit poetry, its theorisation remained inchoate. For all of their differences in terminology and emphasis, these theorists—all of them remarkable literary minds—found something troubling in the act of allusion, and they gave no positive attention to it as a creative or generative technique of literary art, despite the fact that many of the examples discussed by Rājaśekhara could be so understood, and despite the ubiquity and productivity of this habit among poets.

Bilhaṇa—who worked in a literary milieu where Rājaśekhara's influence was palpable—demonstrates this ambiguity in the opening of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, as he ruefully addresses his fellow *kavis* (1.11–12):

sāhityapāṭhoniḍhimanthanotthaṃ kaṇāmṛtaṃ rakṣata he kavīndrāḥ |
yad asya daityā iva luṇṭhanāya kāvyārthacaurāḥ praguṇībhavanti ||
grhṇantu sarve yadi vā yatheṣṭaṃ nāsti kṣatiḥ kāpi kavīśvarāṇām |
ratneṣu lupteṣu babuṣv amartyair adyāpi ratnākara eva sindhubḥ ||

Poets—listen to me. You must protect that ear-nectar that is churned from the depths of literature's ocean, for verse-thieves stand at the ready to seize them, just like the Daityas.

But let them have them, if they wish—what harm can this do to *real* poets? The gods have robbed it of so many gems, yet even today, the Ocean remains their sole source.

As he usually does when speaking of the art of poetry, Bilhaṇa adopts a sort of brittle bravado here. But he protests too much, and shrugs things off too quickly: despite his disavowals of it, allusive borrowing was an important tool for Bilhaṇa in the making of his *mahākāvya*. This can be immediately seen by comparing the poem's opening passage, where this verse occurs, with the beginning of Padmagupta's *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* (see section 7, below, especially note 25). Elsewhere, I have sought to develop a set of theoretical terms in which to discuss what is actually happening in Sanskrit poetic allusion, borrowing from and repurposing some of the conceptual tools that are supplied to us by Ruyyaka's *Alaṃkārasarvasva* (Cox and Sharma 2024). Instead of this more abstract exercise, I concentrate here on the history of one of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*'s many allusions. This al-

ad loc (especially 16–20). Both Rājaśekhara's and Hemacandra's accounts call for more study than I am able to give them here: echoing Granoff (2009, 142–144), I commend this as a worthy topic for a historian of Sanskrit *kāvya*.

lows me to locate Bilhaṇa's literary project within a wider field of force, which includes efforts at homage and affiliation as well as agonistic competition and poetic overcoming. While I largely confine myself to literary history, this sort of attention can make real contributions to our understanding of the relations between different court societies, and so to a history with effects beyond that of the connections and rivalries between particular poets.

2.

To begin, consider VADC 8.25.⁶ This is drawn from Bilhaṇa's toe-to-head description of Vikramāditya's future chief queen, whom he calls Candalā or Candralekhā:

*bhāti romāvalī tasyāḥ payodharabharonnatau |
jātā ratnaśalākeva śroṇivaidūryabhūmitaḥ ||*

The fullness of her breasts was a mass of hovering rainclouds, and so the line of hair on her belly seemed like a shoot of fresh gems arisen from the Beryl Mountain of her hips.

As Nagar notes in his brief commentary to this verse, it recalls *Kumārasambhava* 1.23:

*tayā duhitṛā sutarām savitrī sphuratprabhāmaṇḍalayā cakāśe |
vidūrabhūmir navameghaśabdād udbhinnayā ratnaśalākayeva ||*

[Pārvatī's] mother shone all the more brightly with her [newborn] daughter, encircled by glistening radiance, just as Beryl Mountain shines all the more when a shoot of fresh gems bursts forth at the sound of fresh monsoon clouds.⁷

⁶ My contribution to Cox and Sharma 2024 concludes with a brief discussion of this verse.

⁷ Bilhaṇa returns to this theme (but not to Kālidāsa's words) in VADC 15.3: *raṇa-
dunbubbimeghanisvanaiḥ subbataśreṇividūrabhūmayāḥ | abhavan niṣṭāsivallarīna-
varatnāṅkurakoṭīdanturāḥ ||* 'Through the thunderings of the storm clouds that were war-drums, the many Beryl Mountains that were his columns of troops became jagged with fresh shoots of gems: their whetted swords.' Cf. also *Śiśupālavadha* 13.58 (cited by Aruṇagirinātha, *Kumārasambhavaṇṇakāśikā ad loc*; translation Dundas): *uragendra-*

The indebtedness here is clear and—once you are aware of it—rather obvious. Following Rājaśekhara, we could describe this as genuine *śabdaharaṇa*, with two whole compounds (*vaidūryabhūmi*- and *ratnaśalākā*) lifted directly from the Kālidāsa predecessor with only minimal changes to fit these into the scansion of the *anuṣṭubh*. And this is an allusion made strictly *en passant*: it is not part of a wider context that depends on the knowledge of Kālidāsa's poem. And it is an odd reuse, with the *Kumārasambhava*'s tender theophanic tableau used as raw material for one of Bilhaṇa's arch variations on the male gaze.

What is at work here is more complex than might at first seem: in order to understand the meaning of Bilhaṇa's verse, we have to actively call to mind the wording of Kālidāsa's verse. Bilhaṇa's text lacks precisely the crucial element to make the convention of Beryl Mountain work: it is the sound of thunder that was imagined to make new beryl sprout there.⁸ It is only by recalling what is absent from Bilhaṇa's wording—the sense of the compound *navameghaśabdāt*—that Bilhaṇa's reader is able to activate the pun in *payodharabhara* (at once 'mass of rainclouds' and 'fullness of her breasts'), ascribe the act of thundering to the narrated scene, and so complete the meaning of the verse. While *payodhara* is an easy and hackneyed *śleṣa*, we can only understand that it is meant in two senses via our recollection of Kālidāsa's words. Seen this way, the mismatch or impropriety of the allusion—its repurposing of *vātsalya* or maternal love to explicitly erotic ends—reveals Bilhaṇa's daredevil trick here, as he insists that we see this juxtaposition.⁹

mūrdharubharatnasamnidher muhur unnatasya rasitaiḥ payomucakḥ | abhavan yadaṅga-nabbuvakḥ samucchvasannavavālavāyajamaṇisthalāṅkurāḥ || 'As the mighty raincloud thundered upon nearing the gem-studded heads of serpent princes, the hall's courtyard became spangled with fresh beryl slivers born of Mount Vālavāya [= *vidūrabhūmi*] sprouting from its jewelled pavements.'

⁸ This is made explicit by the commentator Nārāyaṇa, in his remarks on *Kumārasambhava* 1.23: *vidūrabhūmer meghaśabdād vaidūryotpattiḥ, yad āha bhoja: asti śailo vidūrākhyakḥ paryante tatra kācana | mahī ratnākarībhūtā vaidūryam tatra jāyate || meghaśabdena jāyante tatra ratnanavāṅkurāḥ | kramāt pariṇatās te syur maṇayo rājapūjitaḥ ||* 'Beryl (*vaidūrya*) emerges from the country near Mt. Vidūra due to the sound of rainclouds; as Bhoja says, "There is a mountain called Vidūra, in whose vicinity certain parts of the land serve as gem-mines: beryl is born there. Tiny sprouts of gems are created by the sound of rainclouds, and these may subsequently mature into gems that are praised by kings.'" I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation; it does not correspond to those passages describing *vaidūrya* in works ascribed to Bhoja of which I am aware (*Nāmamālīkā* p. 11 [=l. 173]; more extensively *Yuktikalpataru*, pp. 120–123).

⁹ Compare Bronner's discussion of VADC 1.71, which centers upon another raid

3.

Even this slight example shows there to be a specifically cognitive dimension to the Sanskrit poetic allusion: it can trigger thoughts in the mind of a properly socialised listener. It is this cognitive dimension of the allusion that needs to be kept in mind as we turn to another, considerably more complicated case of allusion found in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. This concerns a cluster of references, scattered throughout the poem, to *dhārājala*, ‘the water of (or on) the edge of a sword-blade.’ Bilhaṇa had a strong proclivity for *idées fixes*: for example, he is fascinated by touchstones (*nikāṣa*, *kaṣapaṭṭikā*), by the mythological image of Rāvaṇa shaking Mount Kailāsa, and by the flapping of an elephant’s ear.¹⁰ But *dhārājala*, etc. is something he returns to the most: Appendix 1 documents the fifteen occurrences of this *topos* that I have found throughout the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. Significantly, he gives the water of the sword-blade pride of place, centring his poem’s opening verse on it (Appendix I.1):¹¹

bhujaprabhādaṇḍa ivordhvagāmī sa pātu vaḥ kaṁsaripoḥ kṛpāṇaḥ |
yaḥ pañcājanyaṇpratibimbabhaṅgyā dhārāmbhasaḥ phenam iva vyanakti ||

Like a brilliant black rod rising straight from his arm, may the sword of Kaṁsa’s enemy [=Kṛṣṇa] protect you. Reflecting the image of Pañcājanya, his conch shell, it seems to pour forth foam from the water of its edge.

The potential violence of Kṛṣṇa’s sword’s blade is negated by being figured as a *prabhādaṇḍa* or beam of light; Bilhaṇa, who assigns his long poem

on Kālidāsa’s storehouse, the compound *śarapāṇḍugāṇḍasthalī*—taken over from *Mālavikāgnimitram* 3.8 (Bronner 2010, 465–466), with trenchant observations on Bilhaṇa’s later reputation as the *cauraḥ*, ‘the Thief,’ and on another of Bilhaṇa’s *idées fixes*, his habit of using forms derived from the root *√luṇṭh* (incidentally, the origin of the English verb ‘to loot’; cf. Misra 1976, 38–48). In the case discussed by Bronner, Bilhaṇa adapts an erotic model to a martial context.

¹⁰ Touchstones: 1.3, 1.19, 1.38, 1.54, 2.74, 9.52, 11.90, 18.60, and possibly *Sūktimuktāvalī* 4.106 (cf. Cox 2021, 872); Rāvaṇa’s assault on Kailāsa: 1.61, 18.3, 18.37, 18.54, 18.94 and *Sūktimuktāvalī* 95.8; elephant ears: 3.63, 6.10, 6.74, 6.79, 15.54, and *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2150.

¹¹ All subsequent references to *dhārājala* mentions in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* will be identified by their location in Appendix I, where they are identified by *sarga* and verse number. Similarly, all references to Bāṇa are to their place in Appendix II, where their location in Kane’s and Peterson’s editions is given.

to the suave *vaidarbha* style (1.9, 13), typically downplays the violence of his ostensibly martial and heroic work. The reflection of the god's conch shell on the sword's reflective surface is imaginatively transformed into sea-foam—relying on the convention that sea-shell and sea-foam are one and the same—with the *dhārāmbhaḥ* mediating the reality of the description of Kṛṣṇa and the 'as-if' perception that forms the heart of the verse's figure of speech, an *utprekṣā* or 'envisioning.'

However, the student who turns to most major Sanskrit dictionaries to learn the meaning of *dhārāmbhaḥ* or *dhārājala* will find herself led astray. The trouble seems to begin with the shorter Petersburg *Wörterbuch*, where, s.v., we find 'von der Klinge, von der Schneide triefendes Blut Kād 5,22 Prasannar. 21,3. 62,13. 68,14.' Böhtlingk was followed here (as elsewhere) by Monier-Williams ('blood dripping from the edge of a sword, Kād.'), and by Stchoupak ('sang qui s'égoutte du tranchant d'une épée'). In contrast, Principal Apte wisely chose to not include an entry for the compound in his own dictionary.

Dhārājala has nothing to do with blood. Instead, as a *topos* it works simultaneously on the verbal and perceptual level. Words in Sanskrit often possess multiple meanings, and our dictionaries further inform us that *dhārā* can also mean 'hedgerow,' 'excellence,' 'rumor,' and 'turmeric.' However, *dhārā* possesses two primary senses: 1.) a flood or a stream and 2.) the edge of a sword's blade; additionally, as a proper noun *dhārā*—or rather Dhārā—refers to a city in the central Indian plains, the modern Dhar (see section 8, below). At the simplest level, and concentrating just on the two predominant meanings, *dhārā* supplies the basis for a conventional *śleṣa*.

In contrast, *jala* possesses a single meaning, 'water.' But this being poetic Sanskrit, *jala* is hardly the only string of syllables that can refer to H₂O. To convey the meaning 'water,' a Sanskrit speaker could also say *ambu*, or *ambhaḥ*, or *udaka*, or *nīra*, or *payah*, or *salila*, just to give six common synonyms. The speaker could also use the word *vana*, which—though it is the most common word for 'forest'—can also mean 'water.'¹² I am not even sure how many potential 'water-candidates' there are in Sanskrit: there are certainly dozens.

What I will call the '*dhārājala* complex' is thus innately unstable. The first element must retain its fixed phonetic shape, so it can reliably shift be-

¹² This meaning is widely attested in lexicographers, and is attested in e.g. *Raghuvaṃśa* 9.22d, *Śiśupālavadha* 6.73d, and Udbhata, *Kāvyaḥkārā* 2.*12c (where the meaning is punned, *tanvīm vanagatām* '[Śiva saw the vine/Pārvaṭī] that was slender, in the midst of the forest/water'), and see section 4, immediately below.

tween its two predominant senses; the second can waver in its phonetic, etymological, and metrical shape, provided it retains the semantic capacity to communicate ‘water,’ *inter alia*. Just considered linguistically, the complex is possessed of a wealth of poetic potential energy, a tangled knot of several prosodic, phonesthetic, and semiotic powers. But the complex’s potential is not limited to the strictly intralinguistic. Consider how water and the forged metal of a sword are both alternately dark and sparkingly brilliant; consider also the visual distortion of a sword as it cuts through the air: it seems to present a trailing afterimage, while the sword itself seems to curve like a wave, a distant relation to the whirling firebrand of a typical śāstric example of perceptual error. Beyond these levels of polysemy and perception, there is another material-cultural fact that is captured by the *dhārājāla* complex, to which we will return. First however, there is the question of the earlier history of the complex: what prior examples led Bilhaṇa to adopt it as a leitmotif of his long poem?

4.

The *dhārājāla* complex occurs nowhere in the early canon of the *mahākāvya*: it is completely absent in the works of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, or Māgha. Nor can it be found in the plays of Bhavabhūti, Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa or Śūdraka, nor in Subandhu’s prose *kāvya*. Böhtlingk was not wrong in tracing its occurrence to the *Kādambarī* (K), and indeed it is in Bāṇa’s works that *dhārājāla* first appears. It is however in Bāṇa’s earlier *Harṣacarita* (HC) where the innovation took place. Chronological priority, number of occurrences, and the complexity of use all concur in making the *Harṣacarita* the hothouse in which the *topos* was developed, occurring nine times in seven discrete text-places. In contrast, it only occurs twice in the *Kādambarī*, in a single passage at the very start of the work. I record all of these in Appendix II; here I will review three of the *Harṣacarita* examples, and both of those in *Kādambarī*.

The first two of these *Harṣacarita* text-places are found in the third *ucchvāsa*, which narrates the adventures of Harṣa’s ancestor Puṣpabhūti. Puṣpabhūti has agreed to help Bhairavācārya, a Śaiva ascetic, perform a magical rite to transform him into a *vidyādhara*. At a crucial moment, the king is confronted by an insolent *nāga*, risen from the earth in order to disrupt the ritual. The *nāga* proceeds to verbally abuse Puṣpabhūti (II.2):

*athāpūrvādhikṣepaśravaṇād āśastravraṇair apy amarṣasveda-
cchalenānekasamarapītam asitam asidhārājalam iva vamaḍbhir
avayavair api ...*

Upon hearing such an unprecedented insult, every one of [Puṣpabhūti's] limbs, though they were unwounded by arms, seemed by their angry sweating to emit all of the dark water of the sword-blades they had drunk up in numerous battles ...

In this exploration of *virodhābbhāsa* or 'apparent contradiction,' the king's unmarked skin, never before wounded in battle, drips with sweat as he becomes angered at the *nāga*'s impertinence and seems as if it were purging itself of the *dhārājala* it had previously drunk up. The counterfactual quality here is what gives the description its power: the culture-hero founder of Harṣa's dynasty is perfectly invulnerable, but the contextual fact of the scene—he is so angry that his limbs grow wet with perspiration—is intensified through the reference to *dhārājala* beyond the realm of the real and into a state of paradoxical impossibility.

Several lines later, in what modern editions mark as a new paragraph, Bāṇa returns to the *topos* in a big way (II.3):

*atha karatalasthitasyāṭṭahāsasya madhye tadītam iva nīlajaladharodare
sphurantīm ... striyam apaśyat. [...] sā tu ... abhāṣata tam—vīra, viddhi
mām ... atiniśītaśastradhārāvanabhramaṇa-vibhramasimbhīm, asidhārāja-
lakamalinīm śriyam.*

Then, in the depths of his sword *Āṭṭahāsa* as he held it in his hand he saw a woman, who shone like a flash of lightning in the center of a dark storm cloud ... She addressed him, 'Hero, know me to be Śrī ... the alluring lioness wandering in the forest that is the waters of a whetted sword-blade, the lotus-cluster in a sword-blade's water.'

Here, the sword-edge-as-water complex occurs three times in rapid succession. In the first case the *topos* remains in the background: Puṣpabhūti sees the goddess of sovereignty emerge from the depths of his sword just as she was once churned from the ocean of milk. While the explicit comparison is chromatic—the radiant goddess against the dark metal likened to lightning on a cloud—Bāṇa concatenates this imagined perceptual datum with the antecedent myth, mediated I propose through the dual meaning of *dhārā*, although this remains unmentioned.

On its own, this might not be enough to warrant the phrase's inclusion in our set of occurrences, but for the fact that Bāṇa immediately and explicitly turns twice in rapid succession to the *dhārājala* complex in the following paragraph. The goddess first refers to herself as *śastradhārāvānabbhramanāvibhramasimhī*, 'the alluring lioness roaming in the sword's *dhārāvana*.' Both elements in the compound *dhārāvana* possess a double meaning: *dhārā* in its now-expected senses, and *vana* in its expected sense of 'forest'—which must be understood closely with the following *simhī*—and the additional sense of 'water,' in which it is closely bound up with the preceding *dhārā*. This is immediately followed by the third, sentence-final variation on the *topos*: compared to the virtuosic two-by-two *śleṣa* grid of *-dhārāvana-*, this is comparatively sedate, in keeping with Bāṇa's habit of stylistic decrescendo as he reaches the conclusion of a long sentence. As with the emergence of Śrī/Lakṣmī from the milk ocean, this final occurrence of the complex gestures toward *aitihya* or mythological 'common sense,' as the goddess is conventionally understood to dwell in a lotus.

The final example discussed here occurs much later in the text, and is drawn from a long description of Siṃhanāda, an aged family retainer of Harṣa's as he offers counsel to him and his elder brother Rājyavardhana (II.5):

*pariṇāme 'pi dbautāsidhārājapānatṛṣitair iva vivṛtavadanair bṛhadbhir
vraṇavidāir viṣamitaviśālavakṣāḥ, niśitaśastraṭaṅkakotikuṭṭita-
babubṛhadvraṇākṣarapaṅktinirantaratayā ca sakalasamaravijayaparva-
gaṇanām iva kurvan ...*

[Siṃhanāda], who even in his old age had his broad chest disfigured by great yawning mouths of open wounds, which seemed to thirst for the water of polished sword-blades, and—as he was thus completely covered over by lines of large letters carved into him by myriads of sharpened swords and axes—seemed to reckon up the auspicious moments for every one of their victorious campaigns ...

In contrast to Puṣpabhūti's invulnerable flesh, this imposing veteran is covered in wounds, figured as huge mouths open wide in their eagerness to drink in the *dhārājala*. Siṃhanāda here counsels war to Harṣa and his brother Rājyavardhana, and this Cronenbergian description keeps the carnage of martial violence vividly before Bāṇa's audience's mind's eye. The reference to *dhārājala* then segues into—and motivates—the following *utprekṣā*, where Siṃhanāda's wounds become lines of writing with which he performs the astrological calculations necessary to find the propitious

moment to launch an attack against their enemy, the king of Gauḍa. The *topos* thus begins a train of thought that ends with Siṃhanāda's body becoming a text which he himself is reading.

In contrast to the *Harṣacarita*'s vivid explorations of the *dhārājala* complex, its two occurrences in the later *Kādambarī* are very anticlimactic. These occur in rapid succession in *Kādambarī*'s very first prose paragraph (II.8,9):

*aticirakālalagṇam atikrāntakunrpatisahasrasaṃparkakalāṅkam iva
kṣālayanti yasya vimale kṛpāṇadhārājale ciram uvāsa rājalakṣmīḥ,*

[Śūdraka,] in the pure waters of whose sword-blade Royal Lakṣmī had long dwelt, washing away (it seems) the stain that had long clung to her through her contact with thousands of defeated upstart kings ...

*yasya ca madakalakarikumbhapīṭhapāṭanam ācarato lagnasthūla-
muktāphalena dryāhamuṣṭīni pīḍanān niṣṭhyūtadhārājala bindu-
dantureṇeva kṛpāṇenākṛṣyamāṇā ... rājalakṣmīḥ.*

And who, as he practiced striking open the foreheads of rutting elephants, draws out royal Lakṣmī with his sword, covered with the fat pearls [that lay within them], so that it seemed studded with droplets of water along its blade, squeezed out by his fierce grip upon it ...

Bāṇa thus seems here to be casting a final backwards glance at the verbal experiments and martial themes of his earlier panegyric, as a preliminary settling of accounts before turning to the very different style and narrative matter of his great work of fiction.

5.

At this great distance it is impossible to say whether Bāṇa himself came up with the idea of *dhārājala*, but I doubt that it was his own coinage. As the examples just discussed show, Bāṇa's use of the complex in the *Harṣacarita* is boldly experimental, and thus it seems *prima facie* likely that he could depend on his initial audience's awareness of its tropic possibilities. Were I to guess, I would say that this verbal play may have been already well established as an idiom among those who could speak and understand poetic Sanskrit as a first language. The syzygy of the meanings 'stream of water' and 'edge of a sword' in *dhārā*'s semantic field could have been enough for

the pun to suggest itself, and so be available to Bāṇa's astonishingly fertile narrative and descriptive imagination. But even the most powerful instrument needs raw materials to work upon. And so, while I can only offer it as a cautious conjecture, I propose that the motivation for the idea of *dhārājala* lay in the real world of material culture, particularly in the so-called wootz steel whose manufacture was one of the great technological breakthroughs of the premodern world, which occurred in southern Peninsular India possibly as early as before the onset of the Common Era. The steel's manufacture employed a closed crucible process, with a clay vessel packed with iron and vegetal matter, completely sealed, and then subjected to sustained extremely high temperatures before quenching and forging. The resulting alloy—the earliest of its kind world-wide—is roughly 1.5–2% pure carbon and is possessed of exceptional tensile strength and ductility. More to the point of interest here, the forged metal that is the process's final end-product is marked by a distinctive banded or puddled pattern on its surface, sometimes likened to watered silk [see Fig. 1]. Steel ingots of this sort were exported across Eurasia from early historic times onward; it was South Indian wootz steel that was crafted into the celebrated 'Damascus' swords famous in Western Europe since medieval times.¹³

If Bāṇa's use of the *topos* of the water on the edge of a sword was at least partly inspired by the puddled bands of carbon along the surface of a wootz steel blade, he was it seems in good company: a similar *topos* is found in classical Arabic and Persian poetry, as a testament to the early westward circulation of examples of the steel.¹⁴ The appearance of the *dhārājala* complex in Bāṇa's two prose poems when it was absent in (e.g.) Kālidāsa or Subandhu's earlier works might suggest a process of the dissemination of the material throughout the Subcontinent: while not available in, say, early fifth century Ujjayinī, wootz steel's presence in the material and mental worlds of a poet working in Thanesar in the early seventh century might attest to a process of historical diffusion.

¹³ I rely here on Srinivasan's extensive scholarship, both working independently (Srinivasan 1994, 2007) and with others (Srinivasan and Ranganathan 1997; Srinivasan, Ranganathan, Andersen, and Suwas 2011; Srinivasan, Sinopoli, Morrison, Gopal, and Ranganathan 2009). Srinivasan traces the term 'wootz' to various Dravidian etyma (e.g. Kannada *ukku* [Kittel: 'v.to boil, n. steel'], Tamil *uruku* [*Tamil Lexicon*: 'to dissolve with heat; to melt, to liquify; to be fused'])). Far less plausible is Dube's proposal (2014) to connect the term with Skt. *utsa* [Apte: 'a spring, a fountain,' with only Vedic attestations].

¹⁴ I am grateful to my former Chicago colleagues Tahera Qubtuddin and Thibaut d'Hubert for their expertise on these literatures and their assistance with this question.

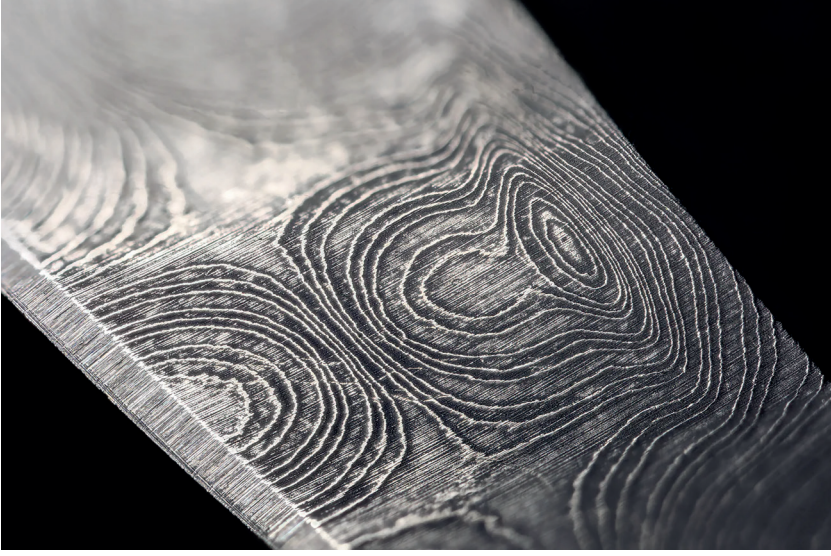


Fig. 1. Wootz steel (image courtesy of <https://bigcatroar.com/blogs/our-articles/the-unsuspected-origins-of-damascus-steel-copy-1>).

Once again, however, I think this unlikely, as South Indian steel ingots were already known as far away as the Mediterranean in imperial Roman times. Rather than being the trace evidence of the dissemination of new material, I think it more likely that Bāṇa's use of the *dhārājāla* complex is a testament to a new form of poetic attention seen in his work. For all its intimidating formal exuberance, enormous lexical range, and wild imaginative power, the *Harṣacarita* is also notable for its attention to details of the everyday world, for what we might call—with significant caveats—a certain sort of realism.¹⁵ For a poet of Bāṇa's interests and abilities, *dhārājāla* permitted him to work upon the stuff of language itself while remaining anchored in sensuous details of the object-world that he shared with his earliest audience.

¹⁵ Although writing about the *Kādambarī* and Bāṇa's surviving verse, both Shulman and Tubb have drawn attention to this, with Shulman noting Bāṇa's 'meticulous naturalistic observation' (2014, 288), and Tubb writing more expansively of 'his acknowledged mastery of the genre of *jāti* or realistic description of individual things [and] his pioneering expansion of the reach of *kāvya* into areas of rural or lower-class life previously avoided by Sanskrit court poets.'

6.

While the *dhārājala* complex did not go on to become a dominant theme in later Sanskrit literature, it was taken up by poets after Bāṇa (fl. ca. 625–650), but prior to Bilhaṇa, who wrote in the final decades of the 1000s. From my own reading and from available etexts, I can point to several authors who employed the trope, though there are surely other instances of which I am presently unaware. All three of the occurrences I discuss are noteworthy insofar as all of them were potentially—and in the most important of these, certainly—available to Bilhaṇa as he set about composing the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.

The first two cases suggestively bracket what we know of Bilhaṇa’s biography and professional life, as he himself documents these in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*’s eighteenth and final *sarga* (18.81–102). The first is found in an epitome of the *Mahābhārata* composed by Kṣemendra, the prolific Kashmirian poet-scholar of the generation immediately preceding Bilhaṇa’s. This occurs deep in his retelling of the *Śāntiparvan*, as the *asura* Namuci’s sovereign power—his *lakṣmīḥ*—addresses Indra (*Bhāratamañjarī* 13.892):

ahaṃ subhaṭakhaḍgāgradhārājalanivāsini |
kamalāpūtamaṅgalyā kamalākaravāsini ||

‘It is I who dwells in the water on the edge of fine warriors’ blades, whose fortune has been purified by the lotus, who dwells in the lotus-cluster.’¹⁶

This depiction of the goddess of sovereignty manifesting herself to an idealised hero-king figure strongly recalls Bāṇa’s episode of Puṣpabhūti, in what I propose to be a deliberate renvoi to the *Harṣacarita*. Kṣemendra was one of the great workhorses of Kashmirian Sanskrit literature, an author who produced reams of verse, and there is no reason to think that Bilhaṇa could have noted this particular instance. Instead, its evidentiary value lies in how unadventurous the use of the *dhārājala* complex had become by his time: in the literary culture that formed Bilhaṇa’s sensibilities, it was something pre-given, a shopworn piece of verbal furniture.

¹⁶ Should we perhaps instead read *kamalā pūtamaṅgalyā*, ‘I ... am Kamalā, whose good fortune is pure’?

A second demonstration how the *dhārājāla* complex became part of the common stockpile of poetic raw materials can be seen in a *praśasti* in praise of a close ally of Bilhaṇa's patron, the Western Cālukya overlord Vikramāditya VI. In the third verse of the Iṭṭagi plates issued by the Kadamba king Jayakeśin I in śaka 984 (=1062 CE), we read:¹⁷

tadanānvaye samabhūt sa gūhallamahīpatih¹⁸ |
khadgadghārāmvunirmagnaproddhatānantapārthivaḥ ||

In his lineage there appeared King Gūhalla, in the waters of whose sword-blade an endless array of arrogant kings had been drowned.

The *praśasti*'s author, one Viśvarūpa, evinces no awareness of the complexity of Bāṇa's old *topos*, making nothing of what I earlier called its poetic potential energy. For the court eulogist, as presumably for his audience, this has just become an opportunity for conventionalised wordplay.

7.

The same cannot be said for Padmagupta, in his *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* (NSAC), written in the first decades of the eleventh century. It certainly seems that he was aware of the *dhārājāla* complex, and of its potential for experimentation. His use of it, however, is oblique: in certain cases, it is not even clear that he had it in mind, where the presence of the common noun *dhārā* may have provided him an occasion.¹⁹ Padmagupta was a talented

¹⁷ Nagaraja Rao and Ramesh 1985, 62–69. On Vikramāditya's alliance with Jayakeśin, and Bilhaṇa's awareness thereof, cf. VADC 5.25 *enam etya jayakeśipārthivaḥ prārthitād adhikam ārpayad dhanam | niścalām akṛta hāsacandrikām *kaunikaṇapraṇayinīmukhendusu ||* (*ārpayad*] A; *arpayad*] J; *arpayan* conj. Nagar; *kaunikaṇa*] J; *koṇikaṇa*-conj. Nagar), 'Jayakeśin came to him with even more wealth than he had requested, and so fixed the moonlight of laughter on the moons that are the bright, lovely faces of the ladies of the Konkan.'

¹⁸ *gūhalla*-] plate; *gūhallā*- Ed.

¹⁹ As I have not yet had the opportunity to study the complete *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*, I largely limit my account of it to such explicit occurrences that I was able to identify through electronic text searches. These results are accordingly provisional. As can be seen in several of the instances collected in Appendix I, a poet could have recourse to the *topos* in verses where the lexeme *dhārā* does not itself occur.

and subtle poet, and an agonistic model of Bilhaṇa's, so his flirtations with the complex are certainly significant.

Like Bilhaṇa, Padmagupta announces his poem's adherence to the *vaidarbhamārga* at its outset, doing so with a notable reference to a sword-blade (NSAC 1.5):

*tattvasprśas te kavayaḥ purāṇāḥ śrībhartṛmeṇṭhapramukhā jayanti |
nistr̥ṃśadbhārāsadr̥ṣena yeṣāṃ vaidarbhamārgaḥ girāḥ pravṛttāḥ ||*

All praise to those ancient poets who touched the truth of things,
Bhartṛmeṇṭha and the rest, whose words travelled by the Vaidarbha path,
which is similar to a sword-blade.

Is the *dhārājala* complex at work here? What is the common property shared between the Southern poetic style and a sword-blade? This most likely indicates the difficulty of the *vaidarbhamārga*, in a gesture toward the *asidhārāvṛata*, the 'sword-blade vow,' a proverbial example of an exceedingly difficult accomplishment.²⁰ Yet the connotations associating the *vaidarbha* style with coolness, luminosity, and liquescence are certainly made available by *dhārā*'s doubled meaning.²¹

²⁰ Long associated with sexual continence—with a sword placed between a man and a nubile woman sharing a bed—the *asidhārāvṛata*'s textual background and especially its place in Tantric ritual literature has been well surveyed in Hatley 2016, who especially and appropriately draws attention to a *locus classicus* that may be Padmagupta's source here, *Raghuvamśa* 13.66 (in Vallabhadeva's version; elsewhere 13.67). To Hatley's references, one may add *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* 1213, attributed to Dharmakīrti: *asanto nābhyaṛthyāḥ suhṛd api na yācyas tanudhanaḥ priyā vṛttir nyāyyā caritam asubhaṅge 'py amalīnam | vipady uccaiḥ sthēyaṃ padam anuvīdheyam ca mahatām satām kenoddiṣṭam viśamam asidhārāvratam idam ||* 'To ask no favors from the wicked; / to beg not from a friend whose means are small; / to be in manner kindly and correct, / in conduct spotless even at the hour of death; / to keep one's stature in misfortune / and follow in the footsteps of the great: / in these rules, though hard to travel as a sword-blade, / good men require no instruction' (trans. Ingalls 1965, 343).

²¹ Cf. NSAC 1.6ab: *pūrṇendubimbād api suṇḍarāṇi teṣāṃ ... yaśāṃsi* ('the fame of those [poets who follow Bhartṛmeṇṭha's path], which is even more lovely than the full moon'), VADC 1.9ac, *anabhavr̥ṣṭiḥ śravaṇāmṛtasya ... vaidarbhar̥iṭiḥ* ('the Vaidarbha style is an unexpected downpour of nectar for the ears') and already in an anonymous verse cited by Vāmana *ad Kāvyaḷamkārasūtra* 1.2.11: *tām etām evaṃ kavayaḥ stuvanti: satī vaktari saty arthe satī śabdānuśāsane | asti tan na vinā yena parisravati vāṇmadhu* ('Poets praise this [*vaidarbha*] style in this way: "There may be a poet, and a topic, and there may

Another possible instance can be found in NSAC 16.103:

kim anyaj jāyatām eṣa khaḍgadhārātithir mama |
ity uktvā kopataralaṃ virarāmāsureśvaraḥ ||

‘What else is there to say? Let him become an honored guest on my sword-blade!’ With this, the king of the *asuras* fell silent, as he quivered with rage.

Once again, this is so subtle as to be at best a borderline case of *dhārājala*. However, I take it that to become a *khaḍgadhārātithi*, ‘an honored guest on a sword-blade’ subtly depends on the presence of water, as one of the basic guest-gifts enjoined in the *smṛtis*.²²

The *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* has a historical patron-hero—the Paramāra king Sindhurāja, father of the great Bhojadeva, who ruled ca. 995–1010—but its narrative is a fantastically inventive fiction. The poem’s seventeenth and penultimate *sarga* describes the climactic battle between the army of *nāgas* and *vidyādhara*s led by Sindhurāja and that of his *asura* nemesis, Vajrāṅkuśa. While at first the Paramāra’s combined celestial and subterranean forces seem to be cruising toward a swift victory, this is interrupted by a counterattack from the *asura* king’s son, Viśvāṅkuśa (17.29):

tadvīryanirvāsitasauṣṭhavānām vidyādharaṇām apatan karebhyah |
dhārāgralagnadvipakumbhamuktāḥ sabāṣpaleśā iva khaḍgalekbhāḥ ||

As his heroic might forced their *élan* into exile, the *vidyādhara*s let the slender swords fall from their hands, as the elephant-lobe pearls stuck along their blades’ edges seemed like traces of teardrops.

While the presence of the complex remains vague, it is possibly implied by the equation of pearls to teardrops; the image is also echoed by a verse in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (See I.10, and cf. II.9, a close verbal parallel in the *Kādambarī*). As the battle continues, Sindhurāja prepares for a final frontal assault (17.46):

vidbūtanistrimśataraṅgītāni sabānacakrikṛtakārmukāni |
batāvaśeṣāṇi puro ’sya celur balāni vidyādharapannagānām ||

be knowledge of grammar, yet the honey of speech does not flow in its absence”).

²² Along with fodder (*trṇāni*), a place to sit (*bhūmiḥ*), and kind words (*vāc*): see e.g. *Manusmṛti* 3.101, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.107.

The divisions of the *vidyādhara* and *nāga* armies that yet remained marched before him, covered over with waves of brandished swords, and full of bows bent back double with their arrows.

Even here, where the equation between swords and water is clearest, the complex remains in the background.²³ In short, there is not a single case where Padmagupta employs the *dhārājala* complex directly, in contrast to Bāṇa's explorations of it or the jejune reliance on it seen in Kṣemendra and Viśvarūpa, the Kadamba *praśastikāra*, and in even more marked contrast to its extensive use by Bilhaṇa in his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. Absent a full study of the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*—something that this superb example of the 'patron-centered court epic' (McCrea 2010) certainly merits—one can only speculate about what this might tell us about Padmagupta's poetic emphases. Had the *topos* grown so stale that he deliberately avoided it in favour of these periphrases? Can these places then be taken as evidence of Padmagupta's efforts to revivify and explore its tropic possibilities? One might object that these four possible occurrences are just phantoms summoned up by my own search for examples of the complex falling between Bāṇa and Bilhaṇa. I consider this doubtful, however, given what appears to be Bilhaṇa's conscious modelling of his own long poem on Padmagupta's. Although this has not been demonstrated at length, there is much evidence to suggest it.²⁴ Alongside the similarity of their titles, both *mahākāvyas* are eighteen *sargas* long and both narrate the lives of their patron kings; while a comparison of their opening verses, which share a common meter, presents a series of close verbal parallels.²⁵ Evidently Bilhaṇa

²³ Several verses later, Padmagupta returns to swords and their edges, but pointedly omits any sort of liquid element (17:51): *parasparāpātājuṣām asinām dhārācyutāḥ saṃyaticūrmareṇuḥ | avāpa tāpiccharucir jayaśrīvilāsakālāñjanadhūlililām ||* 'Sword clashed on sword and from their blade-edges the pulverised dust of austerities [?] fell: dark as the *tamāla* tree, this seemed like the dust of Jayaśrī's alluring dark kohl.' Lacking that area of agreement—and in any case uncertain of the sense of *saṃyati* here—I have opted not to consider this as a possible instance of the complex.

²⁴ McCrea remarks *en passant* (2010, 505): 'the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* does recapitulate all the distinctive formal and stylistic features of the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*.'

²⁵ NSAC 1.3a: *kumbhasthālī rakṣatu vo vikīrṇa-* => VADC 1.3a: *vakṣaṣṭhālī rakṣatu sā jaganti*; NSAC 1.4: *caḥṣus tad unmeṣi sadā mukhe vaḥ sārāsvataṃ śāśvataṃ āvirastu | paśyanti yenāvahitāḥ kavīndrāḥ triviṣṭapābhyantaravarti vastu ||* => VADC 1.10: *jayanti te pañcamanādāmitracitroktisandarbhavibhūṣaṇeṣu | sarasvatī yadvadaneṣu nityam ābhāti vīṇām iva vādayanti ||* (closer in theme than in wording; cf. also *kavīndra-/kaviśvara-* in VADC 1.11, 1.12, 1.18, 1.26); NSAC 1.11cd's *Rāmāyaṇa* theme is vividly undermined by VADC 1.27; NSCA 1.12: *samatsare cetasi durjanānām*

took Padmagupta's poem as a model, perhaps as a principal rival text to be outdone and overcome.²⁶

8.

Padmagupta was a court poet for two Paramāra kings, Vākpati Muṇja (r. 975–995) and Sindhurāja (r. 995–1010, the hero of the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*); along with the Coḷas, the Paramāras were the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas' major military competitors in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The fact that Padmagupta and Bilhaṇa worked at rival courts in successive generations adds an element of political competition to this otherwise purely literary relation. This becomes even more significant in the light of my final example of Bilhaṇa's *dhārājala* verse and what is certainly its precursor. The verse occurs early on, toward the conclusion of his Cālukya *vaṃśāvalī* (I.3):

tasmād abhūd āhavamalladevas trailokyamallāparanāmadheyah |
yanmaṇḍalāgraṇ na mumoca lakṣmīr dhārājaloṭhā jalamānuṣīva ||

Next came Āhavamalla, who was also known as Trailokyamalla: Lakṣmī never abandoned the curve of his sword, as if she were a mermaid sprung from the waters of its edge.

na jātucit sūktiguṇo guṇāya | nisargakṛṣṇendravadhūkapole nīrarthakaḥ kuṅkumapattna-
bhaṇigaḥ || => VADC 1.20: na durjanānām iha ko 'pi doṣas teṣāṃ svabbāvo hi guṇāsa-
hiṣṇuḥ | dveṣyaiva keṣām api candrakhaṇḍavipāṇḍurā puṇḍrakaśarkarāpi ||.

²⁶ On the model of Bhāravi and Māgha (Jacobi 1889, 133). Notably, one area where Bilhaṇa opted not to vie with Padmagupta concerns the connotation of their poems' very similar names. In the case of *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*, the title is an advertisement for one of its noteworthy formal features, that every *sarga* ends with a verse including a distinctive mark (*aṅka*), the word *sāhasa* or a close, metrically exigent variation. Padmagupta is ruthlessly consistent in giving this final tag: it is missing only in the end of the sixth *sarga* (and plausibly it is there as well, if we emend *mahasā* in 6.119c to *sahasā*). Bilhaṇa eschews this gimmick almost completely: after flirting with it in 1.118a (*devasya vikrāmataḥ*, in reference to Vikramāditya's father Someśvara I), its only other occurrence in capping verses are 6.98 (*vikramādityadevaḥ*, in the verse marking his patron's consecration) and 6.99 (*dāsī ... vikramadahanakṛitā nanu śrīr iyaṃ*: to my eye, with self-consciously subversive intent). In what might be a deliberate *śabdaharaṇa*, Bilhaṇa closes out his fourth *sarga* with 4.119's *sāhasalañchanah*, echoing Padmagupta's hallmark.

Here Bilhaṇa introduces the king whom historians now generally call Someśvara I (r. 1042–1068), Vikramāditya VI's father and so the central figure in the poem's early *sargas*. The explicit, named presence of the *dhārā-jala* complex here subserves the climactic depiction of Lakṣmī as a *jalamānuṣī*, a water-woman or (we might say) a mermaid. The *jalamānuṣī* is a little-attested part of the classical Sanskrit bestiary: along with the water-man (*jalamānuṣa*, *-puruṣa/pūruṣa*), her appearance is largely confined to sporadic appearances in story literature.²⁷ This rarity makes it almost certain that Bilhaṇa had a specific source in mind, a widely anthologised *mutaka* verse:

*etasmāḥ jaladher jalasya*²⁸ *kaṇikāḥ kāścid gṛhītvā tataḥ*
pāthodāḥ paripūrayanti jagatīm ruddhāmbarā vāribhiḥ |
*asmān*²⁹ *mandarakūṭakoṭiḥḥaṭanābhītibhramattārakām*
prāpyaikām jalamānuṣīm tribhuvane śrīmān abbūd acyutaḥ ||

Clouds take hold of some few drops from this ocean, and then block up the sky while filling the earth with their waters. After gaining this single *jalamānuṣī* from there, as her eyes rolled in terror at the workings of Mount Mandara's myriad peaks, Viṣṇu became celebrated throughout the universe.

The verse turns on the suggestion that the *jalamānuṣī* is in fact Śrī/Lakṣmī, celebrated as we have seen for her birth from the churning of the Milk Ocean. This in turn motivates the pun in *tribhuvane śrīmān*, meaning both 'celebrated throughout the universe' and 'possessing Śrī throughout the universe.' Working within the confines of a much shorter

²⁷ What references to *jalamānuṣa* and *jalamānuṣamithuna* that I have found include an additional passage to the *Mahābhārata*'s *Virāṭaparvan* (1007*, *apud* 4.57.18, found only in S); three nearly identical occurrences in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* (paragr. 9, 45 and 46; all variations on *jalamānuṣamithunamṛdita*-, 'crushed by the lovemaking of j.-couples,' said of scenic locales), and *Kathāsaritsāgara* 10.7.60 (*jalapūruṣa*) and 12.4.5–6. Relevant to the present discussion, the *jalamānuṣa* also put in brief appearances in the works of Bāṇa (*Harṣacarita*, p. 117, *Kādambarī*, p. 125, echoing Subandhu), while the *jalamānuṣī* serves as a standard of comparison in NSAC 13.41d. Finally, a *jalapuruṣa* puts in a surprising cameo appearance in the *Yuktidīpikā*, the anonymous commentary on Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, *ad kārikā* 31.

²⁸ *Aucityavicāracarcā*, pg. 38 reads *mitāmbu*- 'some few meagre drops' for *jalasya*, likely an improvement meant to remove the repetition.

²⁹ Kṣemendra reads *bhrāmyan*-, 'at the whirling workings of Mount Mandara's,' again probably an improvement.

meter, Bilhaṇa's verse has little of his source's grandeur, and makes explicit what it only cleverly implies. At first glance, Bilhaṇa's verse thus appears to be a banalisation, a poor use of his raw materials, and an *arthaharaṇa* that fails to achieve any effect of its own.

This verse is variously attributed: in his *Aucityavicāracarcā*, Kṣemendra, who as we have seen was a major literary presence in Bilhaṇa's Kashmir, assigns it to Mālarudra; in the *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa*, Vidyākara ascribes it to none other than Muñja, the Paramāra king. In the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, Śrīdhara—like Vidyākara, a scholar far to the east, in Bengal—attributes it to some Hari; while Jalhaṇa's *Sūktimuktāvalī*, which is an important witness to the Western Indian literary culture where Bilhaṇa spent much of his active life (Cox 2021), calls its author Jalamānuṣīrudra.³⁰ The latter is clearly a pen name associating this poet with this particular verse, on the model of Ghaṇṭa-Māgha and Dīpaśikhā-Kālidāsa.

Kṣemendra and Jalhaṇa both tell us this poet's name was Rudra; the former tells us he lived in Mālava, which was Paramāra country. Vidyākara's attribution suggests that he was a figure associated with Muñja's highly refined literary court, the site of Padmagupta's early career (NSAC 1.7–8). Conventionally, Muñja's execution after his capture by the Western Cālukya king Tailapa II around 995 CE is one of the watershed moments in the history of the Paramāras.³¹ This is based, however, upon the much later and embroidered account found in Merūttinga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (compiled ca. 1306 CE, following Cort 2001, 35). There seems in fact to have been little clear evidence of this claim prior to the reign of Bilhaṇa's patron Vikramāditya VI, when references to it began to appear in what might be a revised or newly imagined tradition of Western Cālukya military-political success.³²

After several decades of ebbing Cālukya-Paramāra tensions, the relative calm had been shattered by Āhavamalla Someśvara I, Vikramāditya's father and the king whom Bilhaṇa eulogises here, when he launched a major campaign into the Paramāra domains, apparently occupying Dhārā and chasing

³⁰ These data are drawn from Sternbach 1978, 248–249 (his no. 1133).

³¹ E.g. Ganguly 1933, 60–62, Krishnamachariar 1974, 401, 502n1.

³² See the brief mixed prose and verse record from Gadag in Fleet 1892, and *pace* Pollock 2006, 154n, who dates it to Tailapa's own time. Pollock is correct when he notes that Merūttinga's account of Muñja's beheading appears to conflate two separate events described in the inscription: *adaṭaṃ muñjanam kōṇḍu ... yuddhadolū pañcalana taleyaṃ kōṇḍu cālukyarājyāspadamam kaikōṇḍu ... tailabhūpa*, 'King Taila, having killed the valiant Muñja ... taken the head of the Pañcala in battle, and having possessed himself of the regal dignity of the Cālukyas' (translation Fleet's, slightly modified; my transliteration).

Bhoja from his own capital.³³ The evidence here takes on a hall-of-mirrors quality, as by far the most detailed source for this event is its recounting in VADC 1.91–97, just three verses further along than I.3, where the name of Bhoja's capital provides the occasion for word-play tedious enough to try the patience of even the most sympathetic reader. Beyond the evidence furnished by our poem and a few colligatory references, we can infer that a major disruption befell the Paramāras. For decades, the line based in Dhārā had been an ascendent politico-military force in Central India as well as the patrons of its most brilliant literary court; however, following Bhoja's long reign, they effectively collapsed. This swift declination was emblemized by the fact that Bhoja's immediate successor, the obscure Jayasiṃha, adopted a characteristically Cālukya regnal name, seemingly as a mark of fealty to Vikramāditya (he is VADC 3.67's *mālavendum śaraṇam praviṣṭam*, 'the lord of Mālava who came for refuge').

Presuming Mālarudra to be a poet of Muñja's court, we may understand I.3 to be part of an explicit attempt by Bilhaṇa to transfer some of the literary charisma of the Paramāra court to the Cālukyas, an effort which we may locate within the wider imperial imagination of Vikramāditya VI's reign. But this is a subtle act of textual appropriation, and so to understand it as a simple act of propaganda is far too reductive. Mālarudra's verse was well-known: Bilhaṇa was possibly even familiar with it during his early life in Kashmir. Unlike the allusion to the *Kumārasambhava* with which I began, the straightforward understanding of Bilhaṇa's verse does not finally depend on knowing the source text; instead, it is the pay-off following the moment of first-order understanding. When she first encounters this verse in the course of Bilhaṇa's Cālukya lineage-history, the reader first is guided by the presence of *dhārājala* to understand why Lakṣmī is figured as a mermaid: in a distant echo of Bāṇa's image of Lakṣmī manifesting from the

³³ For the conventional historical accounts of this event, see Ganguly 1933, 94 and Nilakanta Sastri 1958, 177. Two records from high-ranking underlords of Someśvara I supply the nearest thing to corroborating evidence. The earlier of the two, dated śaka 980/1058 CE (Krishnamacharlu 1928, no. 8B), records the donation of a man variously named Madhusūdana and Madhuva, bearing the epithet Daṇḍanāthatriṇetra and high martial titles (ll. 158–159: *karṇāṭasandhivigrāhi* and *mahāpracaṇḍadaṇḍanāyakaṃ*), who is described as *uccāṭitadbārānāthan* ('who drove off the king of Dhārā'; vs. 45 l. 132). A little more than a year later, in śaka 981/1060 CE (Barnett 1925) another donor, the *mahāpracaṇḍadaṇḍanāyaka* Nāgadeva, is said to be *mālavayavaṃśārṇnavajvaladaurbbāṇaṇa* ('the submarine fire to the ocean of the lords of Mālava') and *bhojabhujamgāhidviṣaṃ* ('the Garuḍa [or: the mongoose?] to that snake, Bhoja').

depths of Puṣpabhūti's sword, the goddess is given a home in the water of the blade's edge. It is only after this that the reader might recall the existence of what seems to be the most significant appearance of a *jalamānuṣī* in earlier *kāvya*, Mālarudra's *subhāṣita*. And so it is only then can there be a further step where the reader becomes aware of the triangulation between borrowing author, borrowed author, and the two court societies in which they worked. This would then trigger a new, third level of meaning, of *dhārā qua* Dhārā: 'the Lakṣmī born of the waters of Dhārā' remains forever attached to Someśvara's scimitar. It is this further equation, then, that permits Bilhaṇa's series of riffs on the conquered city's name, where only one of these (I.4) has direct recourse to the *dhārājāla* complex.

There is thus an encapsulation of the conception of this one particular poet—a conception so specific to Bilhaṇa's model that it is encoded, for some people anyway, in his *nom de plume*. Bilhaṇa accomplishes this all with studied ease, making the quiet part of Rudra's verse loud. This insouciance shows Bilhaṇa looting the resources of the celebrated Paramāra *sabhā*, and so perhaps gesturing to the ways that his patron's father had helped himself to their capital's moveable treasure. That it is Śrī/Lakṣmī—at once 'sovereignty,' 'beauty' and 'wealth'—that is the focal figure here can only be a deliberate choice.

9.

The pathway just described—from interpretative engagement with Bilhaṇa's words, through recollection of a predecessor text, to finally arriving at a historico-political connotation—is conjectural. This roughly describes my own philological excavation of the allusion's (possible) meaning, sitting in my twenty-first-century study with a battery of searchable etexts at my disposal. Whether a *sahṛdaya* of the late eleventh century might have traversed a similar hermeneutic pathway with the texts he knew by heart or possessed in manuscript is another question altogether, and one that I lack the means to answer. In speaking of 'pathways,' I betray the influence of models for thinking about how Sanskrit poetry operates that can be traced in great detail in the Kashmirian tradition of *alaṃkāraśāstra*.³⁴ *Ālaṃkārikas*, howev-

³⁴ Particularly from the work of Ruyyaka, with his characteristic attention to the sequential cognitive processes of literary understanding, a method which he himself associates with Ānandavardhana: see Cox 2017 and Cox and Sharma 2024. See also Bronner 2016 on Udbhaṭa's pioneering explorations of this style of poetics.

er, were emphatically not historians of literature and, to return to the point where we began, they evinced little interest in the phenomenon of allusion.

So, beyond the small (but genuine!) satisfaction of correcting our existing dictionaries' entries for *dhārājāla*, what can be learned from this exercise? To begin from positive facts: it seems certain that the story of the *dhārājāla* complex began with Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, and that this is consistent with the seventh-century prose master's exploration of the expressive powers of Sanskrit yoked to acute observation of the actual, tangible world. It is also certain that the corpus of Bilhaṇa's *dhārājāla* verses far exceeds that of any other post-Bāṇa poet up to his own time and quite possibly in the whole history of Sanskrit literature. In taking up and extending the complex, Bilhaṇa conspicuously announces himself to be one of the 'sons of Bāṇa,' to borrow a phrase from Bronner, Shulman, and Tubb (2014). Characteristically, this is for him an agonistic, competitive effort, one intended to claim his own preeminence in the area of the *carita*, the literary biography of a ruling king; it is here where I find that the relationship with Padmagupta's *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* takes its salience. The dynamics of appropriation at work between the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* and the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* merit a dedicated study: I suspect that the evidence furnished by the *dhārājāla* represents just a single point in a complex triangulation among the works of Bāṇa, Padmagupta and Bilhaṇa, where the later poets took the works of the prose master as charter instances of their own projects of literary fashioning.³⁵

As the attentive reader will have noted, in the preceding paragraph I have slipped from the philological data (broadly, stipulable and quantifiable occurrences of one or more words) into the framing of interpretative hypotheses about these data. I mention this not because there is something illegitimate about the framing of hypotheses; on the contrary, I do so to draw attention to the necessity of such a hermeneutical framing. The data do not interpret themselves. This point—obvious enough on its face—deserves emphasis in the particular context of the present volume, a record of a mem-

³⁵ In speaking of 'dynamics of appropriation,' I echo the subtitle of Hinds 1998, not only a superb study of the allusive habits of neoteric and early imperial Latin poets, but also a set of balanced and thoughtful methodological reflections. In addition to adopting Hinds's chosen term of art in speaking of 'allusion' here (as opposed to 'reference,' or 'intertext'), and admiring the many careful and convincing readings that fill his pages, I find particularly valuable his warnings against 'some consequences of philological fundamentalism,' which seek to limit the remit of the allusion to speciously intentionalist models of verbal parallel (1998, 20).

orable 2022 gathering in Bologna on the topic of the historical reference in Sanskrit *kāvya*. The antihistorical presupposition of much of Sanskrit literary art, to say nothing of systematic thought, is so generalised a presumption as to not require argument: it is in fact enough to cast any evidence of historical referentiality within *kāvya* as rule-proving exceptions. This has long put Indologists in a tough spot: since its origins as a modern discipline at an unstable join between European classical studies, colonial and paracolonyal knowledge production, and traditional South Asian erudition, much of Indology has been founded on historicist principles, even as some of its practitioners have sought to question or to overcome these. Faced with our frequently recalcitrant archives, questions of relative and (eventually) absolute chronology have informed the labours of generations of scholars for two centuries. When a poet or a thinker named a contemporary king, whose existence could be confirmed through other colligatory source-materials, it tended to be a cause for celebration.³⁶ Deeply reliant upon these past labours as I am, I have no wish to belittle their accomplishment. But it has left our profession with few conceptual tools beyond such positivism when trying to frame ideas about the particulars of *kāvya*'s historical ways of being.

The only such tool that has been widely employed—the notion, crudely borrowed from historical sociology, of 'legitimation'—is imperfect, more likely to obscure than to reveal anything about the historical referentiality we can unearth from works of *kāvya*. The criticism of the theory of legitimation has been extensive, and there is no need to rehearse it here.³⁷ Suffice it to say that this theory preempts, and so leaves unanswered, any question of what the *content* of these works might be. Bilhaṇa is deeply ambivalent about royal power and spends far more time and effort on springtime revels and louche drinking parties than he does on the details of military campaigns, while Padmagupta focuses on variations upon fantastic narrative conventions—

³⁶ Striking a tentative note, his introduction to his 1875 *editio princeps* of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, Bühler describes the situation thusly: the 'reason, why the Sanskritist longs in vain for works that could serve as foundations for his historical researches lies not, therein, that the rulers of India found no contemporaries willing to chronicle their deeds, but therein that nobody cared to preserve historical works from destruction or to make them easily accessible by copying and recopying the original MSS' (1875, 2). The great scholar devoted little thought to what the historical nature of such works in fact amounted to, beyond chiding Bilhaṇa and poets like him for possessing 'vitiated taste and a false conception of the duties of a historiographer Royal' while granting that 'the main facts which they relate may be accepted as historical' (ibid., 3).

³⁷ See Pollock 2006, 511–524 and, following this, Cox 2016, 56–58.

delvings into the underworld and romantic assignations with snake-princesses—largely adopted from earlier Jain story literature. To say that these simply present convenient representations intended to flatter the powerful with Photoshopped images of themselves is completely inadequate. Neither work is deeply invested in the narrativisation of political history, yet both—I insist—are invested in making history. That their principle raw materials were the stuff of prior *kāvya* rather than the chancellery documents of their particular court societies does not foreclose this historicity.

When Bilhaṇa abducted Mālavarudra's *jalamānuṣī*, albeit in a single verse in a work that contained more than fifteen hundred more, he was making history, certainly of literature and arguably of these two vying courts. To understand this history, we need to read: to read closely, carefully, broadly, and with an interpretative audacity that mirrors that of our poets.

Appendix I: Dhārājāla in the Vikramāṅkadevacarita

1. 1.1:

bhujaprabhādaṇḍa ivordhvagāmī sa pātu vaḥ kaṁsarīpoḥ kṛpānaḥ |
yaḥ pāñcajanyapratibimbabhaṅgyā dhārāmbhasaḥ phenam iva vyanakti ||

Like a brilliant black rod rising straight from his arm, may the sword of Kaṁsa's enemy [=Kṛṣṇa] protect you. Reflecting the image of Pañcajanya, his conch shell, it seems to pour forth foam from the water of its edge.

notes: See section 3, above.

2. 1.5:

sāndrām mudam yacchatu nandako vaḥ sollāsalakṣmīpratibimbagarbhaḥ |
kurvann ajasraṁ yamunāpravāhasalīlārādhāsmaraṇaṁ murāreḥ ||

May Nandaka give you fresh joy. With an image of passionate Lakṣmī mirrored within, it constantly reminds Mura's slayer Kṛṣṇa of Rādhā as she bathed in the Yamunā's flood waters.

notes: While there is no explicit appeal to the *dhārājāla* complex here, it potentially motivates the equation between the (proverbially dark) Yamunā and the sword's dark yet reflective blade.

3. 1.87:

tasmād abbūd āhavamalladevas trailokyamallāparanāmadbeyaḥ |
yanmaṇḍalāgraṁ na mumoca lakṣmīr dhārājālotthā jalamānuṣīva ||

After him came Āhavamalla, who was also known as Trailokyamalla: the goddess of victory never abandoned his sword-blade, as if she were a mermaid sprung from the waters of its curved edge.

notes: See section 8, above.

4. 1.92:

agādhapānīyanimagnabhūribhūbhṛtkuṭumbo 'pi yadīyakhaḍgaḥ |
bhāgyakṣayān mālavabhartur āsīd ekāṃ na dhārāṃ paribhartum īśaḥ ||

Although [Āhavamalla's] sword was an ocean—filled with such limitless water that it had drowned whole families of kings, like mountains swallowed up [at doomsday]—due to the king of Mālava's collapsing fortune, there was one stream, Dhārā, it could not forgo.

notes: See again section 8, above. As in nos. 2, 10, and 11, the complex remains implicit in the depiction of the sword's *agādhapānīya*-. Unlike those other cases, however, our keyword *dhārā* occurs here, but as a proper and a common noun ('stream,' 'Dhārā').

5. 2.74:

nṛpapriyā sthāpayitum padadvayīm iyeṣa dikkuṇṇarakumbhabhittiṣu |
cirāya dhārājālapānalampatā kṛpāṇalekhāsu mumoca locane ||

[Āhavamalla's queen] was the king's darling. She wanted to rest her feet on the crowns of the elephants of the quarters; she was fixated on the idea of drinking up the water of sword-blades—she could hardly take her eyes off their edges.

notes: *Dhārājala* is here combined with the widely established *topos* of *dohada*, the morbid cravings thought to afflict women during pregnancy.

6. 3.64:

adarśayat kām api rājahaṃsalilām asau kuntalarājasūnuḥ |
nistrimśadhārājalasaṃgataṃ yad dviśāṃ yaśaḥkṣīram ivācakaṛṣa ||

The Kuntala prince played the part of a goose, and remarkably so, when he drew out the milk of his enemies' bright fame as it mixed with the dark waters that seemed to shimmer on the edge of his sword-blade.

7. 5.32:

varṇayāmi vimalatvam ambhasaḥ kiṃ tvadīyakaravālavartinaḥ |
eti yatprabhavam aindavīm dyutiṃ viśvasuktipuṭamauktikaṃ yaśaḥ ||

[The Coḷa ambassador addresses Vikramāditya:] ‘Could I describe the purity of the water that inhabits your sword-blade? The glory that comes from it is the pearl of the world—it has the moon’s own lustre.’

8. 5.33:

khaḍgavāri bhavataḥ kim ucyate lolaśaivalam ivārikuntalaiḥ |
yatra rājati niveśitam tvayā rājahaṁsanivahopamam yaśaḥ ||

[He continues:] ‘What really can one say of the water that runs along your sword? Its streaming banks of moss are your enemies’ long hair, and the glory you’ve made stay there is a flock of brilliant bright geese.’

notes: Although they do not closely coincide in their wording, this verse and no. 7 form a doublet, a pair of successive verses on a closely similar theme. On this habit of Bilhaṇa’s, see Cox 2021, 878n33 (adding 13.49–50 to the instances recorded there) and compare nos. 14 and 15, below.

9. 12.68:

ānamya līlāparivartanena vīlaṅghayām āsa narendramuktām |
kaṇṭhonmukhīm kācana kambukaṇṭhī smarāsīdhārām iva vāridhārām ||

With a playful dodge, one lovely woman ducked down and escaped the jet of water that the king shot her way: like the sword-blade of Kāma, it was aimed at her throat.

10. 15.53:

galitadvipakumbhamauktikacchalato vyomanibhāsimandālī |
vinimīlitatārakāvadaj jayatigṃmāṁśum ivodayonmukham ||

The mass of dark swords resembled the night sky, its stars faded away as the pearls from the elephant’s foreheads dripped from them, and so it announced that the sun of victory was soon to arise.

notes: While this verse only includes a slight trace of the *dhārājala* complex—in the liquid quality attributed to the pearls from the elephant’s frontal lobes—its close resemblance to another such marginal case (NSAC 17.29: see section 7), as well as its dependence on II.9, prompts its inclusion here.

11. 17.45:

*mahābhaṭānām karavālayaṣṭayaḥ samucchādvīrarasorminirmalāḥ |
vinirgatāḥ kośābilodarāt tataḥ kṛtāntapāśoragasamṇibhā babhūḥ ||*

The great warriors' slender swords were washed clean by the crashing waves of *vīra* *rasa*: as they emerged from the burrows of their sheathes, they seemed like the serpents [that make up?] Yama's noose.

notes: This is another implicit gesture towards the complex, though here it is relatively certain: it is only the background awareness of *dhārā*'s double meaning—or the perceptual fact of the 'watered silk' pattern on a steel sword—that motivates the mention of *vīrarasormi-* in its second quarter. I am unaware of any parallels to the notion that Yama [= *kṛtānta*]'s noose contains or is composed of snakes.

12. 18.33:

*satyatyāgapramukhanikhilotkarṣasampattisīmā
tasminn āsīd avanivanitāvallabho 'nantadevaḥ |
vairistamberamaghanaghaṭāgarjitānām agamye
cakre dhārāpayasi yadaseḥ kīrtihamṣī nivāsam ||*

In [Kashmir] there once was a king—Anantadeva, lover of the Earth,
a reservoir of every excellence: honest, generous, and much else beside.
The goose that is fame made her home in the waters
of his sword-blade, beyond the reach of the thunderings
of the massed storm clouds that were his enemy's elephant corps.

13. 18.43:

*śrīkāśmīrakṣitibhuji gate vaśyatām yadguṇānām
ūhuś cintāklamaparicayaṁ kāni nāntaḥpurāṇi |
svacchā kīrtir nabhasi bisinīpatramitre luloṭha
ścyotaddhārāsānilam akarod dhāma lakṣmīḥ kṛpāṇam ||*

The lord of Kashmir was so under the spell
of [queen Subhāṭā's] many virtues,
what rival's zenana was not accustomed
to an undertow of worry?

His spotless bright Fame rolled about in the sky,
dark like a lotus-petal, and his lady Fortune
made a home in his sword, dripping with the water of its blade.

14. 18.51:

punyair airāvatakarikaroccaṇḍadordaṇḍaśālī
devyām tasyām kalaśanṛpatīs tasya jātas tanūjaḥ |
saṅkhyotsaṅgād apasṛtavatām bhūbhujām vallabhā śrīḥ
khadḡe yasya dvīpamadamaṣīpaṅkalipte luloṭha ||

The king and the queen had a son, Kalaśa,
his arms were more fearsome than the trunk of Airavata.
When other kings fled from close combat with him
the goddess who once loved them
bathed in the mud that encrusted his sword,
ink-dark with the musth of rut-elephants.

notes: Compare here Bronner's discussion (2010, 464–466) on Bilhaṇa's
fascination with 'thickening,' and especially cf. VADC 1.70.

15. 18.52:

darpādhmātāpratibhaṭanṛpavṛātasenāśīrāṃsi
tyaktvā sāndrollasadasilatāśaivalaśyāmalāni |
hemāmbhojapratimavadanālokanād eva yasya
prāptā lakṣmīś caraṇanikaṭaṃ kīrtihaṃsāvataṃsā ||

One look at his face, bright like a lotus of gold,
was all that it took: Lakṣmī and her pet goose
(that is to say, Fame) took up a place near his feet,
leaving behind the armies of the hordes of
his arrogant royal enemies,
despite the luxuriant grazing-grounds
of their shining wet sword-blades.

notes: nos. 14 and 15 constitute yet another doublet.

Appendix II: Dhārājala in Harṣacarita and Kādambarī

[*Harṣacarita*, all references to Kane's edition.]

1. p. 49 (third *ucchvāsa*):

*kāḷindīpravāham iva stambhitajalam ... lokavināśāya prakāśitadhārāsāraṃ
pralayakālameghakaṇḍam iva nabhastalāt patitaṃ ... kṛpāṇam*

A sword fell from the heavens ... like the dark current of the Yāmunā, its waters arrested in place, like a fragment of a jet-black doomsday cloud, its streaming down-pours lit up by its lightning.

2. p. 52 (ibid.):

*athāpūrvādhikṣepasravanād āśastravranair apy amarṣasveda-
cchalenānekasamarapītam asitam asidhārājalam iva vamaḍbhir avayavair api ...*

Then, upon hearing such an unprecedented insult, every one of [Puṣyabhūti's] limbs, though they were unwounded by arms, seemed by their angry sweating to emit all of the dark water of the sword-blades they had drunk up in numerous battles ...

3. p. 53 (ibid.):

*atha karatalasthitasyāṭṭahāsasya madhye taḍitaṃ iva nīlajaladharodare
sphurantīm ... śrīyam apaśyat. [...] sā tu ... abhāṣata tam—vīra, viddhi mām ...
atiniśītaśāstradhārāvanabhramāṇavibhramasiṃhīm, asidhārājalakamalinīm
śrīyam.*

Then, in the depths of his sword Aṭṭahāsa as he held it in his hand he saw a woman, who shone like a flash of lightning in the center of a dark stormcloud ... She addressed him, 'Hero, know me to be Śrī ... the alluring lioness wandering in the forest that is the waters of a whetted sword-blade, the lotus-cluster in a sword-blade's water.'

4. p. 57 (fourth *ucchvāsa*):

*tathā ca yasya pratāpāgninā bhūtiḥ, śauryoṣmaṇā siddhiḥ, asidhārājaleṇa
vaṃśavṛddhiḥ,*

[Prabhākaravardhana], through the fire of whose martial valour there arose the ash of fortune, by the heat of whose heroism there was the alchemical transformation of success, by the water of whose sword-blade there was the increase of the bamboo of his lineage.

5. p. 99 (sixth *ucchvāsa*):

*parināme 'pi dhautāsīdhārājapānatṛṣitair iva vivṛtavadanair bṛhadbhir
vraṇavidārair viśamitaviśālavakṣāḥ*

[Simhanāda], who even in his old age had his broad chest disfigured by great yawning mouths of open wounds, which seemed to thirst for the water of polished sword-blades.

6. p. 101 (ibid.):

*etās' ca satatasam̐nibitadhūmayamānakopāgnayaḥ sulabhāsīdhārā-toyatr̥ptayo
vikaṭabāhuvanacchāyopagūḍhā dhīratāyā nivāsaśīśirabbūmayāḥ svāyattāḥ
subhaṭānām uraḥkavāṭabbhittayaḥ*

And the broad door-panels of your warriors' chests contain the fires of their anger, smoking as they are constantly banked anew, satisfied by the plentiful waters of their sword-blades sheltered in the shade of the forest of their terrifying arms, they are a cool resting place for manly resolve, utterly self-controlled.

7. p. 116 (seventh *ucchvāsa*):

*viśadahāsam iva kīrteḥ, phenarāśim iva khaḍgadhārājālānām, yaśaḥpaṭalam iva
śauryaśālītāyāḥ trailokyādbbutam mahac chatram*

... the great parasol, a wonder of the triple world, [brilliant as] Fame's bright smile, as the mass of foam on the waters of sword-blades, as the expanse of heroism's fame ...

[*Kādambarī*, references to Peterson's edition.]

8. p. 5:

*aticirakālalagnam atikrāntakunṛpatisahasrasaṃparkakalanīkam iva kṣālayantī
yasya vimale kṛpāṇadhārājale ciram uvāsa rājalakṣmīḥ*

[Śūdraka,] in the pure waters of whose sword-blade Royal Lakṣmī had long dwelt, washing away (it seems) the stain that had long clung to her through her contact with thousands of defeated upstart kings ...

9. p. 6:

*yasya ca madakalakarikumbhapīṭhapāṭanam ācarato lagnastbūlamuktāphalena
dr̥ḍhamuṣṭinīpīḍanān niṣṭhyūtadbārājālabindudantureṇeva kṛpāṇenākṛṣyamāṇā
... rājalakṣmīḥ*

And who, as he practiced striking open the foreheads of rutting elephants, draws out royal Lakṣmī with his sword, covered with the fat pearls [that lay within them], so that it seemed studded with droplets of water along its blade, squeezed out by his fierce grip upon it ...

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Poeticising history, historicising poetry. On literary borrowing in late medieval historical-biographical Sanskrit *kāvya*

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1. *Introduction*

There is a tendency, in most scholarly approaches to Sanskrit *kāvyas* narrating the lives and deeds of historical figures,¹ to evaluate these works based primarily on the amount of historical information they provide, and their apparent reliability, as opposed to the literary matter in them. This tendency can be understood from the point of view of a historical method that seeks to distinguish between the ‘hard facts,’ supposedly presented in the least poetic and most straightforward narrative guise, and the concessions to literary tradition, conventions which the authors could not, or would not, be freed from. This approach, however, has limited a closer analysis of the formal aspects of many of these works. Furthermore, its rigid dichotomy of content and form has constrained to its inherent theoretical problems most efforts to interpret the nature and functions of historically-themed *kāvya* in Sanskrit South Asia.²

¹ I think that the definition ‘historical-biographical’ *kāvyas* best describes the content of these works, which tend to focus on the historical narrative around the deeds of a central character.

² This tendency recurs, for example, in Pathak (1966) and Warder (1972–2011).

In this essay, I seek an alternative approach by focusing on precisely those passages in the works I analyse, that appear as least narrative, most descriptive, and, above all, explicitly borrowed and reworked from earlier texts. In doing so, I aim to propose a different perspective: namely that these passages, and the very imitative character they display, play a fundamental role in structuring the work's narrative and informing its understanding by the audience. Furthermore, I argue that literary borrowing reflects a deliberate creative approach to historical writing, where historically conditioned events are narrated through iterative literary material. This, in turn, entails a reflection by the authors on their very sources of imitation, resulting in a historicising engagement with the literary tradition.

As a starting point, I will analyse literary borrowing in the *Madhurāvijaya* (MV) or (*Vira-*) *Kaṃparāyacarita*, a Sanskrit *mahākāvya* by the fourteenth-century poetess Gaṅgādevī. This work, in nine *sargas* of which the last three in a fragmented form, narrates the life of Kampana, son of Bukka I of Vijayanagara, and his military enterprises respectively against the kingdom of Tuṇḍira (Tuṇḍaimaṇḍalam) and the Sultanate of Madhurā (Madurai), culminating in the conquest—or rather liberation, as the work presents it—of the latter city. It was retrieved in 1915 in a palm leaf composite bundle in Trivandrum³ and first edited in 1916.

Among the many points of interest of this work, such as its historical value and its female authorship, its overt reliance on literary borrowing as a creative tool represents a further relevant feature. This aspect has received a remarkable amount of scholarly attention, from the critical introduction of the *editio princeps* (Sastri and Sastri 1916, iv–v; 1924, ii–vi), to a number of unpublished dissertations (Mudigonda 1989; Trivedi 2003) and two more recent monographs (Dodamani 2008; Sudyka 2013). However, while these studies provide extremely valuable insights about Gaṅgādevī's work, in this essay I depart from them in two respects. First, most of them, Sudyka's being a remarkable exception,⁴ focus primarily on the authors named in the

For a more extensive discussion on the origin and problems of this approach I refer the reader to Kaul (2014).

³ I am currently researching the present collocation and state of the original manuscript, nowadays nowhere to be found in any South Indian collection, and the existence of other manuscripts of the text.

⁴ In particular, I think Sudyka is right in assuming the influence of Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* (KSS) on the poetess (Sudyka 2013, 45–47). Comparison, e.g. between MV 3.34 KSS 12,34.38; MV 9.36 and KSS 2,4.79; MV 9.4 and KSS 2,4.79; MV 3.8 and KSS 9,1.16 may corroborate her evidence.

kavipraśamsā in the proem of the work (MV 1.5–16: Vālmiki, Vyāsa, Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Bhāravi, Daṇḍin, Bhābhūti, Kaṇāmṛtakavi alias Līlāśuka, the Telugu poet Tikkayya, and the Kākātīya era Āgastya, Gaṅgādhara and Viśvanātha). However, reading the *kavipraśamsā* as a literal enumeration of stylistic models can be misleading. In fact, Gaṅgādevī borrows little to nothing from many of the authors she mentions, whereas, as we will see in the following paragraphs, she draws extensively on authors she does not name. In the concluding paragraph of this essay I will suggest what could be a more productive reading of the passage.

Second, these analyses mostly focus on individual verses and images, while paying less attention as to how the poetess borrows entire narrative structures, or in other words, patterns of arrangement of the literary material for the development of her narration. Focusing on this aspect of Gaṅgādevī's borrowing technique, in the second part of this essay I will demonstrate how it underscores a recurring formal trend in second-millennium Sanskrit *kāvya*. Analysing this trend allows us, on the one hand, to identify the emergence of a distinct historical-biographical form from the turn of the millennium onwards, in turn reflecting a renewed sensibility for historical narration. On the other hand, it helps us to appreciate how these works—which often, in terms of literary appreciation, appear indeed rather conventional and reiterative—are nonetheless effective in displaying a historical narrative for their audiences.

2. Sandal, camphor and pearls: literary borrowing in the Madhurāvijaya

Gaṅgādevī's work offers a paradigmatic case study of literary borrowing in late Sanskrit *kāvya*. Formally, in the *Madhurāvijaya* this practice ranges from quasi *verbatim* reproductions of entire verses, as this verse cited by the curators of the *editio princeps* (Sastri and Sastri 1916, iv–v; 1924, ii–iii), recast from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* (Ragh),⁵

sa nayan mahatīm senām vyarucad vīrakuñjarah |
payodamālām ākarṣaṇ paurastya iva mārutaḥ || MV 4.35 ||

He, leading the vast army, that elephantine hero, shone like the eastern wind
pulling a garland of clouds;

⁵ All translations in this essay are my own. In the *Madhurāvijaya*, I follow the readings and verse numbering of Subrahmanyaśāstrī 1969.

sa senāṃ mahatīm karṣan pūrvasāgaragāminīm |
babbau harajaṭābhraṣṭām gaṅgām iva bhagīrathah || Ragh 4.32 ||

He shimmered, drawing forth the vast army directed to the eastern ocean
like Bhagīratha the Gaṅgā sprung from the braids of Śiva;

to more elaborate reworkings. For example, in a verse describing spring,

upavaneṣv agamann upameyatām sphuṭaruco navakiṃśukakuṭmalāḥ |
mathitapānthamrgakṣatajārūnair madanakesarīṇaḥ kuṭilair nakhair
|| MV 5.64 ||

In the forest, the blossoming buds of tender *kiṃśuka* became a term of comparison for the crooked claws of that lion that is Love, red of the blood of those gazelles that are the love-worn travellers;

the poetess borrows the wording from a scene of King Daśaratha hunting lions in the *Raghuvamśa*:

tān hatvā gajakulabaddhatīvravairān kākutsthah
kuṭilanakhāgralagnamuktān [...] || Ragh 9.65 ||

The scion of Kakutstha, having slain them, sworn enemies of the elephant race, with pearls still sticking to the tips of their crooked claws [...].

In the first example, the ingenious rearrangement of specific words highlights the borrowing of the whole verse. Thus, the root *kṛṣ-*, which in the *Raghuvamśa* verse governs the entire construction, in the *Madhurāvijaya* verse is recast to govern the second clause. Similarly, in the *Raghuvamśa* the army is directed to the ‘eastern ocean’ (*pūrvasāgara*), whereas in the *Madhurāvijaya* it is the wind (*māruta*) to be ‘eastern’ (*paurastya*). In the second example, the audience is supposed to be familiar enough with Kālidāsa’s poetry to connect the redness of Gaṅgādevī’s metaphorical crooked claws of the *kiṃśuka* flowers to the bloody redness implied in the literal crooked claws of the lions.

Gaṅgādevī’s tendency to ‘mark’ some of her borrowings through indicative words pointing to her source of imitation proves this as a deliberate practice of her creative technique. This emerges, for example, in the first passage we have considered. Similarly, in the following two verses from the *nakhaśikhavarṇana* describing the adolescent Kampana,

*sa sarvataḥ parvatakandarāśrayaiḥ parigrahānugrahakāṅkṣibhir gajaiḥ |
vitīrṇam utkocatayeva dhīradhīr adhārayad vibhramamantharam gatam
|| MV 3.6 ||;*

He, the one of steady intellect, held a slow, majestic pace, as if offered to him
as a bribe by the mountain-dwelling elephants, seeking his protection;

*adhārayad darśitadehasauṣṭhavāṃ sa rājasūnus tanuvṛttamadyatām |
parākramatrāsītacittavṛttibhir mṛgādhīrājair upadīkṛtām iva || MV 3.9 ||*

He, that scion of kings, held a slenderness in his waist, evidence of his bodily
strength, as if gifted to him by the lions, aghast at his courage;

by employing the term *utkocatā*, bribe, the poetess points toward an analogous
description in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*:

[...] *caḥṣuḥ kuraṅgakair, ghoṇāvaṃśaṃ varāhaiḥ, skandhapīṭhaṃ
maḥiṣaiḥ, prakoṣṭhabandhaṃ vyāghraiḥ, parākramaṃ kesaribhir,
gamaṇaṃ mataṅgajair, mṛgayākṣapīṭaśeṣair bhūtair utkocam iva dattaṃ
darśayantaṃ mād̥havaguptaṃ dadṛśatuḥ |* (Parab 1912, 140)

The two saw Mād̥havagupta [...] who seemed to have received his eyes from
the gazelles, his nose from the boars, his shoulders from the buffaloes, his fore-
arms from the tigers, his courage from the lions, his gait from the elephants, as
if offered to him as desperate bribes after losing everything else in the hunts.

Elsewhere, Gaṅgādevī marks her appreciation for an image by reusing it
throughout the poem. For example, in this instance of multilingual borrow-
ing, two verses at different points in the *Madhurāvijaya* are reworked from
the Śakuntalā episode in the Telugu *Āndhramahābhārata*:⁶

*br̥daye candanālepaiḥ karṇe mauktikakuṇḍalaiḥ |
satāṃ mukhe ca karpūrain yasyābhāvi yaśobharaiḥ || MV 1.31 ||*

He whose lauds were for the beings like rubs of sandal on the chest, pearls to
the ears, and camphor in the mouth;⁷

⁶ For a more extensive discussion of Gaṅgādevī's connection to the Telugu literary
tradition, see Mudigonda (1989, 116–119).

⁷ This rather uncommon morphosyntactic construction, with subject and noun

tathā na karpūrabharair na hārair na candanair nāpy amṛtāṃśupādaiḥ |
yathābhavan nirvṛtam asya gātram sutāṅgasamsparsābhuvā sukkena
 || MV 2.38 ||

Then his body was as thrilled at the joy produced by the touch of his son's limbs, as it would not have been for masses of camphor, pearls, sandal or for moonbeams;

viparītapratibhāṣal ēmiṭikin urvīnātha yi putragā-
trapariṣvaṃgasukhambu sēkonumu muktāhāra karpūrasām- |
draparāgaprasarambu jaṃdanamu jaṃdrajyotsnayam butragā-
trapariṣvaṃgamun aṭlu jīvulaku hr̥dyambē kaḍun śītame || Āndhr. 1,4.90 ||

‘Why these twisted retorts, o King? Savour the joy of hugging the limbs of this your son. Pearls, aspersions of camphor dust, sandal, and even moonbeams—so refreshing to the heart is the hug of the limbs of a son for the beings.’

The series ‘pearls, camphors, sandal’ appears twice in the *Madhurāvijaya*. In the second instance, describing King Bukka’s elation at the birth of Kampana, Gaṅgādevī basically shows the former doing what Śakuntalā was exhorting Duṣyanta to: appreciating the birth of a male son like precious ointments and jewels and embracing him. The original *arthāntarany āsa* is shifted in Sanskrit into the narrative mode. In the first instance, reference to the living beings (*satām*), for whom the lauds of Bukka are as refreshing as the three precious substances, echoes the *jīvulaku* in the Telugu original.

3. Cycles of seasons, layers of kāvyas

While the reworking of imagery and phrasing is a defining stylistic feature of Gaṅgādevī’s work, a broader analysis of the poem reveals how literary borrowing shapes the *Madhurāvijaya*’s narrative structure. This is particularly evident in the central section of the work, spanning *sargas* 5 to 7. In the first four *sargas* we have been led through a presentation of Kampana’s father Bukka,

predicate in the instrumental and the copula in the passive aorist or imperfect, marks an evident linguistic idiosyncrasy of the poetess, who employs it about ten times in her poem: MV 1.31; 4.13; 5.8, 16, 20, 25; 7.10, 28; 8.7. Compare the same construction in Ratnākara’s *Haravijaya* 19.64 (see below).

his queen Devayī and his capital Vidyānagara, alias Vijayanagara (MV 1), the hero's birth, upbringing and marriage (MV 2–3) and his first military exploits, culminating in the victory over the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam Sambuvarāya (MV 4). The sequence of descriptive passages in MV 5–7 creates a break in the plot, which will resume from *sarga* 8 with the apparition of a divine woman—the *nagaradevatā* of Madhurā, as inferable from the fragmented text—exhorting Kampana to continue his Southern campaign, culminating in the liberation of Madhurā (happening in *sarga* 9).

The transition occurs not only in the narrative but also in Gaṅgādevī's choice of literary models. In *sargas* 5 to 7, the *Madhurāvijaya* shifts from a narrative structure modelled on the cycle of King Raghu in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* to an almost three-*sarga*-long sequence of descriptive passages. This is the well-known 'seasons–flower picking–water sports–sunset and nightfall' cluster of descriptions, developed by Māgha (who, in turn, moulded it after Bhāravi), and risen to a convention adopted by a number of later authors. In the following paragraphs I will further analyse the function of this sequence within the *Madhurāvijaya*'s narrative, and how it characterises the historical-biographical *kāvya* form. What I want to remark on here, is Gaṅgādevī's technique of layering multiple literary models, and how it highlights the poetess's approach to the creative potential of literary borrowing.

Sarga 5 opens with Kampana, after the victory over the Sambuvarāya, establishing his capital in Marakatā (Virīṇcipūra) and reigning there (MV 5.1–15). This opening mirrors Raghu's reign after his victory over Indra and his coronation in the *Raghuvamśa* (4.1–13). However, most imagery here is borrowed from the description of Duryodhana's rule in the *Kirātārjunīya* (Kir): for example, like the Kaurava halls of power (Kir 1.16), Kampana's pavilions are muddled by the dust of royal jewels splashing in elephants' ichor (MV 5.7). But it is by comparing the end of the respective passages in the *Madhurāvijaya* and the *Raghuvamśa* that we witness Gaṅgādevī's ingenuity in shifting between different literary models. Whereas Kālidāsa ends the passage with a description of autumn (Ragh 4.14–24), which seamlessly transitions into Raghu's *digvijaya* (Ragh 4.25ff.), in MV 5.16 Gaṅgādevī begins, with summer, a description of all the six seasons, which lasts until the end of *sarga* 5 and is followed by sequences of flower picking, water sports (MV 6—a lacuna mid-*sarga* hides the transition between these two sequences), sunset and moonrise (MV 7.1–38, 39ff.).

Mudigonda (1989, 107–108) and Trivedi (2003, 21–23) primarily recognise in this section the influence of Bhāravi, based on the poet's mention in the *kavīprasamsā*. Its organisation of the literary material, however, closely follows the model of *sargas* 6–9 of the *Śiśupālavadha* (Śiś), with the cycle

of seasons, at the beginning of the sequence, introducing the garden sports episodes.⁸ Māgha's influence is all the more evident in this section's imagery and wording. In the flower picking sequence, for example:

attha viditam iyaṃ drutā gamis te mukham avalokayitum nivṛtya bhartuḥ |
na kim alam aparāṅgam eva tāvad dayitatamasya mṛgīdrśāṃ manāṃsi
 || MV 6.12 ||
stanajagghanabharam tavāli jāne tad api gatis tvarayā tvayā vidheya | ...
 || MV 6.13 ||

‘I know that this quick step of yours is intended to peek, having reached him, at the lord's face. Alas, the intellect of us gazelle-eyed ladies is hardly worth the back of the beloved!’

‘The weight of your hips and breasts, friend, I know; yet you must quicken your step...’

drutapadam iti mā vayasya yāsīr nanu sutanuṃ paripālayānuyāntīm |
nabi na viditakhedam etadīyastanajagghanodvahane tavāpi cetaḥ || Śiś 7.12 ||

‘Tread not at such a quick pace, o friend! Won't you wait for the beauty following you? Does it not come to your mind the fatigue of carrying such heavy hips and breasts?’⁹

Similar reworkings can be found in the water sports sequence:

avanipatir asikta dīrghikāyāṃ mukhakamalam salilena sābbhilāsam |
kim api samadbhikārdrapakṣmalekhaṃ vadanam abhūd aruṇekṣaṇam
parasyāḥ || MV 6.57 ||

The king in the pond jokingly splashed water on a lotus-like face: yet somehow another girl's face got wet eyelashes and reddened eyes;

⁸ Trivedi (2003) mentions the influence of the *Śiśupālavadha*, yet the sole instance she offers is rather thin. I hope to offer more robust evidence here.

⁹ See also Sudyka (2013, 53–54) on the parallels of these teasing exchanges in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. One may compare also Kir 8.7ff. and, possibly, the *Haravijaya* (17.53ff.).

ānandaṃ dadhati mukhe karodakena śyāmāyā dayitatamena sicyamāne |
īṣyantyā vadanam asiktam apy analpasvedāmbusnapitam
ajāyatetarasyāḥ || Śiś 8.36 ||

While one beauty's face glowed with joy as her lover splashed water on it, the face of a jealous rival, though untouched by water, glistened with abundant sweat.

The choice of metres (*drutavilambitā* for the seasons in *sarga* 5, *puṣpitāgra* in *sarga* 6) also point towards Māgha's influence. On the other hand, in structuring the sequence from flower picking to the sunset and moonrise description, Gaṅgādevī looks back to Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, devoting one *sarga* to the first two episodes (MV 6, Kir 8) and the first half of the following *sarga* (MV 7.1–38; Kir 9.1–33) to the crepuscular sketch. To be sure, instances abound of borrowings of descriptions of seasons, and their corresponding royal pastimes, from other sources as well.¹⁰

Gaṅgādevī further diversifies her models in *sarga* 7, featuring the descriptions of sunset and moonrise followed, in the second half, by a poetic encounter between Kampana and the poetess herself, who at his behest improvises a description of the full moon. On the whole, the transition from the garden sports passages to the self-insertion of Kampana's poetess wife mirrors the structure of *sargas* 17–23 of Ratnākara's *Haravijaya* (HV): descriptions of flower picking (HV 17), water sports (HV 18), sunset and moonrise (HV 19–20), culminating in a character delivering a poetic depiction of the moon (HV 21.1–21). At the same time, in developing the latter episode Gaṅgādevī further transitions to a reworking of Śrīharṣa's *sarga* 22 of the *Naiṣadhbhīyacarita* (NC), where Damayantī offers a poetic description of the Moon to Nala (Mudigonda 1989, 114–115; Trivedi 2003, 23; Sudyka 2013, 177). The affinity becomes evident from the opening lines of the respective episodes:

atha kampanrpo 'pi kṛtyavit kṛtasandhyāsamayocitakriyāḥ |
avadat savidhe sthitāṃ priyāṃ bhuvi gaṅgety abhinanditāhvayām
|| MV 7.39 ||

Then King Kampa, knower of duties, having completed the evening rites, told his beloved, seated nearby, calling her by the appellative 'Gaṅgā on Earth';

¹⁰ Most importantly, the cycle of King Agnivarṇa in the *Raghuvamśa*. Compare e.g. MV 5.76 and Ragh 19.47.

*upāsya sāndhyaṃ vidhim āntimāśārāgeṇa kāntādharmacumbicetāḥ |
avāptavān saptamabhūmibhāge bhaimīdharaṃ saudham asau
dharendrah || NC 22.1 ||*

The king, after completing the evening rites, recalling at the sight of the western glow his beloved's lips, ascended to Damayantī on the seventh floor of the palace.

It is worth noting how, in the first part of MV 7, imagery from the description of sunset and moonrise, which in the *Naiṣadhīyacarita* is recited by Nala in his poetic declamation, is recast by Gaṅgādevī in what, in the *Madhurāvijaya*, is *not* a recitation. Compare for example these verses:

*ravirathyakhurotthitāparakṣitibhṛdgairikareṇuṣṇayā |
kṣaṇam ekam akāri sandhyayā varuṇāśārūṇakaṇcukabhramah || MV 7.20 ||*

By the redness of the red chalk dust of the Western mountain, raised by the pawing of the solar cart horses, evening assumed the appearance of a bronze corset for that lady that is Varuṇa's region;

*uccaistarād ambaraśailamauleś cyuto ravir gairikagaṇḍaśailah |
tasyaiva pātena vicūrṇitasya sandhyārajorājir ibhojjibhite || NC 22.4 ||*

‘From the lofty summit of the sky the sun has fallen like a rock of red chalk. As it shattered into pieces upon impact, its dust now emerges as the evening glow.’

Elsewhere in the crepuscular description, Gaṅgādevī looks back to Bhāravi:

*kamalodarasambhṛtaṃ karair madhu pītvā ravir ujjhitāmbarah |
spṛśati sma diśaṃ pracetaso na madaḥ kasya vikārakāraṇam || MV 7.5 ||*

Having gathered with his rays a handful of lotuses and sipped their nectar, the Sun, abandoning its course, slipped into the region of Pracetas: in whom, after all, intoxication does not cause clumsiness?;

*aṃśupāṇibhir atīva pipāsus padmajam madhubhṛśam rasayitvā |
kṣībatām iva gataḥ kṣitim eṣyan lobitam vapur uvāha pataṅgaḥ || Kir 9.3 ||*

Parched with thirst, having sipped the sweet nectar of the lotuses from those cupped hands that were his rays, the sun, as if drunk, sank below the earth, his body turning crimson.

Finally, the influence of Ratnākara becomes evident in this verse:

jananīm upalabhya yāminīm adhikasnehadāsābhivardhitāḥ |
divasasya layaṃ prapeduṣo grhadīpā muhur arbbakā iva || MV 7.32 ||

Resembling children orphaned of the agonising day, the household lamps, tightly clung to mother night, were rekindled by abundant affection [or: oil];

where Gaṅgādevī skillfully builds on a famous verse, and one of the *śleṣas* therein, from Ratnākara's *Haravijaya*:

niṣṭhyūtakajjalakarāśikhaṇḍakhaṇḍair utsaṅgavṛttim adbigamya
niketanānām |
snehānubandbibbir adīpi dināvasānasandhyārbbakair iva sarāgakarair
pradīpaiḥ || HV 19.64 ||

Having dark patches of blazing lampblack [or: bristly tufts of hair], having climbed to the upper terrace [or: to the lap], having affectionate [or: oily] relatives, having reddish hands [or: rays], the lamps of the households appeared [or: shone] like children of the dusky evening.

The multiple literary models layered in this section can be summarised as follows:

	Military episode	Description of reign	Seasons	Flower picking	Water sports	Sunset, moonrise	Description of the Moon by a character
Ragh	3.39ff.	4.1–16	4.17ff. (autumn)				
Kir				8.1–26	8.27ff.	9	
Śiś			6	7	8	9	
HV				17	18	19–20	21.1–21
NC						22.1–59	22.60ff.
MV	4	5.1–15	5.16ff.	6.1ff.	6.55ff.	7.1–38	7.39ff.

4. The goddess quoting Kālidāsa

Gaṅgādevī's use of multiple sources for her borrowing practice finds another study case in the resumption of the plot in *sarga* 8 of the *Madhurāvijaya*, where a divine woman exhorts Kampana to the liberation of Madhurā from the oppressive Turuṣka rule. As it appeared evident from the discovery of the work, the first part of this episode is a reworking of the opening of *sarga* 16 of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, where the tutelary goddess (Ragh 16.9: *purah ... adbhidevatā*) of Ayodhyā appears to King Kuśa, bewailing the abandonment of her city for the new capital Kuśavatī and asking him to restore its former glory. It is precisely through comparison with the *Raghuvamśa* that in the *Madhurāvijaya* episode, fragmented in the beginning and end, we can identify the divine woman as Madhurā's *nagaradevatā* (Sudyka 2013, 171ff.).

Gaṅgādevī makes her borrowing explicit by recasting imagery and wording from her literary model. To cite the most striking instance, the verbal form *dr̥ṣtvā dūye*, found in Ragh 16.21, is recast, with variation, three times in the *Madhurāvijaya*:

ghuṇajagdbhakavāṭasamputāni sphuṭadūrvāṅkurasamdhimaṇḍapāni |
ślathagarbhagrāhāni vīkṣya dūye bhṛśam anyāny api devatākulāni || MV 8.4 ||
madhuropavanam nirikṣya dūye bahusah khaṇḍitanālīkeraṣaṇḍam |
parito nṛkarotiḥkōṭihārapracalacchūlaparamparāparitam || MV 8.8 ||
śvasitānilaśoṣitādharāni ślathasīrṇāyatacūrṇakuntalāni |
babubhāṣapariplutekṣaṇāni dramīḍānām vadanāni vīkṣya dūye
|| MV 8.15 ||

‘The other temples, having seen, I grieve—with their doorframes and gate panels devoured by woodworms, pavilions invaded by *dūrva* plants that have sprung up everywhere, and dilapidated altars’

‘The gardens of Madhurā, having seen, I grieve—with the groves of palm trees uprooted, dotted with rows of hideous poles on which garlands of human skulls dangle’

‘With their sighing breath, parched lower lips, their loosened and careless braids of hair, their eyes dimmed with many tears, the faces of the Dramīḍa women, having seen, I grieve.’

In the following sequence, the deity, having conjured up through her divine power (MV 8.17: *ātmanah prabhāvāt*) a dark metal sword, presents it to the king as a propitiatory gift for his southern liberation war. It is at this point that Gaṅgādevī transitions to a reworking of the episode of the gift of

a sword by the ascetic Bhairava's servant to King Puṣyabhūti in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (*ucchvāsa* 3). Comparison of the two passages highlights the parallels in them:

attha taṃ kaladhautakośa[taś sā ka]ralagnatsaruruccakbhāna khaḍgam |
aciroyjhitakañcukānubandhasphuṭakāloragabhogasāmyabhājam
|| MV 8.18 ||
kṣayakālakarālabhadrakālīgālakālāgarukardam āyamānaiḥ |
mahasām prasarair adīpahāryaṃ kim api dhvāntam iva prakāśayantam
|| MV 8.19 ||
pratibimbitadīpakāntimantaḥsphuṭatāpiñchataruprasūnanīlam |
navam ambudharam viḍambayantam jaṭharojjṛmbhitavaidyutaprakāśam
|| MV 8.20 ||
taṃ arātinarādhināthanārīnayanāmbhaḥkaṇapātāhetubhūtam |
prabbur unmiṣitasvarōṣavahner adbhikoddāmam amamsta dhūmadandaṃ
|| MV 8.21 ||

Then from a golden tray, firmly grasping it, she extracted that brand, resembling the hood of a black snake shimmering as it sheds the old skin;
Seeming to glow with an ever-unfolding darkness, like aloe cream as black as Bhadrakālī's throat at the time of the world's destruction, eluding the flickering light of the lamps;

Dark as a flower blossoming on a *tāpiñcha* tree aglow with reflected light, imitating a young cloud radiant with lightning swelling in its belly;
A cause of floods in the eyes of the women of enemy sovereigns, the king fancied it as a fierce spire of smoke rising from his own flaring wrath.

ity abhidhāyāpahṛtakarpaṭāvavacchādanāt parivārād ācakarṣa
śaradgaganam iva piṇḍatām nītam, kālindīpravāham iva
stambhitajalam, nandakajigīṣayā kṛṣṇakopitam kālīyam iva kṛpānatām
gatam, lokavināśāya prakāśitadhārāsāram pralayakālamēghakhaṇḍam
iva nabhastalāt patitam, dr̥śyamānavikaṭadantamaṇḍalam hāsam iva
himsāyāḥ, haribāhubandaṃ iva kṛtadr̥ḍhamuṣṭigrahām,
sakalabhuvanaajīvitāpaharaṇakṣameṇa kālakūteneva nirmītam,
kṛtāntakopānalataptenevāyasā ghaṭitam, atitikṣṇatayā pavanasparśenāpi
ruṣeṣa kvaṇantam,
maṇisabhakūṭṭimapatatpratibimbacchadmanātmānam api dvidheva
pāṭayantam, ariśiraśchedalagnaiḥ kacair iva kirānaiḥ karālītadbhāram,
muhur muḥur tadidunmesataralaiḥ prabhācacrachuritair jarjaritātāpam
khaṇḍaśaś chindantam iva divasam, kaṭākṣam iva kālarātreḥ,

*karnotpalam iva kālasya, oṃkāram iva krauryasya, alamkāram
 ahaṃkārasya, kulamitraṃ kopasya, dehaṃ darpasya, susahāyaṃ
 sāhasasya, apatyam mṛtyoḥ, āgamanamārgaṃ lakṣmīyāḥ,
 nirgamanamārgaṃ kīrteḥ, kṛpānam ||* (Parab 1912, 107)

With these words, he removed the covering of rags and drew forth a sword, similar to the embodiment of the autumn sky, or the stream of the Kālindi solidified, or the snake Kāliya, angered against Kṛṣṇa, turned into a sword in its frenzy to conquer the Nandaka, or a lump of the black cloud of doomsday fallen from heaven, heralding the world-dissolving deluge, or a smile of hate displaying its bared row of teeth, or Hari's arm with its tightly clenched fist; looking as if made of *kālakūṭa* poison capable of taking the lives of all the world, or as if composed of steel seething with the fiery wrath of fate; seeming to hum with rage at the mere touch of the air by its exceeding sharpness, and to split itself in two as its image fell upon the jewelled pavement of the hall; looking as if jagged in its edge by rays similar to hairs of decapitated foes sticking to it after; seeming to mince daylight, whose splendour was cut asunder by its inlay of radiance flickering like a continuous flash of lightning; resembling the side-glance of the night of doom, the ear-lotus of death, the triumphal cry of pitilessness, the ornament of arrogance, the trusted friend of wrath, the incarnation of pride, the comrade of valour, the child of death; an arrival pathway for glory, a departure pathway for fame.

Two qualities both Gaṅgādevī and Bāṇa want to exalt in their divine swords: one is the blackness of the metal, a guarantee of the excellent quality of the weapon's forging, and at the same time imbuing it with a sinister aura; the other is the uncanny brilliance that emanates from its dark blade. Bāṇa evokes them in two distinct points of the description: the first in the series of attributes that goes from *śaradgaganam iva* to *kṛtāntakopānalataptenevāyāsā ghaṭitam*, the second from *ariśiraśchedalagnaiḥ* to *khaṇḍaśaś chindantam iva divasam*. Gaṅgādevī, in verses 19 and 20 adopts a symmetrical scheme in which the first two *pādas* describe the first quality and the last two the second. This gives the poetess the opportunity to show the agility of her poetic style, playing, in verse 19, on the contrast between the light of the lamps and the darkness of the weapon which is accentuated, instead of being softened, by them; an image exemplified in the next verse through the metaphors of the *tamāla* flower (white, but blossoming among dark leaves) and the cloud (black, but flashing with bright lightning).¹¹

¹¹ The pairing of these two images recalls Śiś 6.28.

From the *Harṣacarita* passage Gaṅgādevī recasts one more simile, *kaṭākṣā iva kālāratreḥ*, in a description of arrows in *sarga* 9 of the *Madhurāvijaya* (right before the sword is drawn by Kampana in a climactic hand-to-hand with the Suratrāṇa):

*bāṇā nirastā yavanena tasminn apāṅgapātā iva vīralakṣmyāḥ |
kampeśvareṇā 'py abhipārasikaṃ śarāḥ kaṭākṣā iva kālāratreḥ ||* MV 9.29 ||

Arrows were shot at him by the Yavana, like furtive winks of the fortune of war, and darts by King Kampana at the Pārasika, like side-glances of the night of doom.

It is also worth noting that, just as Bāṇa's Puṣyabhūti, at the end of the sword sequence, 'fancied the whole Earth to be in the palm of his hand through the power of that sword' (*tena kṛpāṇenāmanyata karatala-vartinīm medinīm*), so elsewhere in the *Madhurāvijaya* Kampana has a similar fantasy of power after mounting his horse: ... *tam āruhya mahīpatih | amamsta prthivīm sarvām ātmano hastavartinīm ||* (MV 4.29).¹²

The *nagaradevatā* episode is one of the most important in the *Madhurāvijaya*, both from the point of view of plot development and from that of ideological narrative, as it frames the imminent conquest of Madhurā as a godly mission in the name of *dharma* and affirms Kampana's centrality to the enterprise.¹³ The gift of the sword, which, as the goddess explains, once belonged to the Pāṇḍyas, provides a further element of legitimation to Kampana's military feat and adds to the ideological significance of this episode (MV 8.24). Thus, it is all the more remarkable that the whole *sarga* is built on the reworking of two passages from earlier works.

¹² Furthermore, in MV 8.31 *calavenibhir ulbaṇāruṇākṣair ... strṇu gām tuluṣka-śīrṣaiḥ ||*, Gaṅgādevī borrows wording from two battle scenes in the *Raghuvamśa* (Ragh 4.63 and Ragh 7.58). The original perfect *tastāra* is shifted by the poetess into the imperative: *strṇu*. The *Madhurāvijaya*'s *editio princeps* gave a corrupted **strṇagāt*; comparison with the *Raghuvamśa* verses corroborates the emendation *strṇu gām*. Thiruvēnkatachari (1957) and Subrahmanyasastri (1969) must have reached this conclusion *ope ingenii*, as they make no mention of the correspondence.

¹³ Whereas inscriptional evidence points to the role of different Vijayanagara generals, primarily Gopana and Sālva Maṅgi. For an extensive discussion of this aspect of the passage see Sastri & Sastri (1924, 18–19) and Sudyka (2013, 124ff.).

5. Ideologies and visions

The examples in the preceding paragraphs illustrate Gaṅgādevī's way of interweaving material borrowed from her remarkably vast literary culture within her poem. How can we relate them to a broader practice of literary borrowing, and, in turn, to the development of a distinct form of historical-biographical Sanskrit *kāvya*? To elaborate on this point, we can compare Gaṅgādevī's borrowing of Ragh 16.4–23 with similar reworkings of the episode in three other Sanskrit historical-biographical *mahākāvyas*.

Two of these precede our poetess: they are Someśvara's *Kīrtikaumudī* (KK) and Bālacandra's *Vasantavilāsa* (VV), thirteenth-century biographies of the Jaina Gujarat minister Vastupāla. In the first work, we have a vision of the *rājyalakṣmī* of Gujarat appearing to King Lavaṇaprasāda, sovereign of the Vāghelā cadet branch of the Caulukya dynasty, exhorting him to appoint Vastupāla to ministry to take over the affairs of the kingdom, sunk into a political crisis due to the inefficiency of Bhīma II Caulukya as a paramount ruler. In the second, god Dharma appears to Vastupāla, already a minister, to urge him to put the entrepreneurship he displayed in Gujarat's political management (narrated in the previous *sargas* of the poem) to the service of the languishing Jaina *saṅgha*. The third work, which comes after the *Madhurāvijaya* and, as already noted by the editors of the latter's *editio princeps*, is evidently influenced by it (Sastri & Sastri 1924, v–vi), is the mid-seventeenth-century Nārāyaṇa's *Rāghavendrāvijaya* (RV), a hagiography of the renowned Mādhva saint. Here the protagonist, still the layman Veṅkaṭanātha, receives a vision of goddess Sarasvatī, who urges him to take initiation as Rāghavendra for the benefit of the Mādhva community.¹⁴

Comparison of the respective episodes in these works allows us to trace the fortunes of this motif from thirteenth-century Gujarat to seventeenth-century Deccan. I will further elaborate on the philological insights this analysis offers in my closing note to this essay. What I want to focus on here is how the borrowing from Ragh 16.4–23 is retooled by all three authors into a powerful ideological device, where the expression of politically

¹⁴ Notably, the speech of the goddess describes what *would* happen if Veṅkaṭanātha does not devote his *naiyāyika* talent to the rescue of the Mādhva faith; so, all verbal constructions are not in the present but in the potential. As in the first verse of the speech: *tasmād ... rājā vidyārājyalakṣmyāḥ bhava tvam | no cel lumpen nityavācām vicāraiḥ sākaṁ loke vaiṣṇavaḥ saṁpradāyaḥ ||* RV 6.54 || 'Thus ... be a husband for the tutelary deity of wisdom. Otherwise, the Vaiṣṇava lineage would perish in this world, together with the conventions of fine discoursing.'

significant, or even problematic, ideas is channelled through, and perhaps made possible by, the very derivative nature of poetic borrowing.

This way of reworking the episode can be traced back to Someśvara (KK 2.83ff.). As Prabha (1976, 248ff.) observes, the problematic nature of Someśvara's account of Gujarat's history around Bhīma II's times arises when comparing it with another biography of Vastupāla, Arisimha's *Sukrtasaṃkīrtana* (SS). In it, it is Bhīma himself who has a vision—here extremely concise—of his exalted ancestor Kumārapāla, commanding him to appoint Vastupāla as minister for the salvation of a Gujarat in turmoil (SS 3.1ff.). Ostensibly, Someśvara's celebration of the entrepreneurship of Lavaṇaprasāda, and his son Vīradhāvala, in the affairs of Gujarat was at odds with the narrative, exemplified in Arisimha's account, legitimising Bhīma II Caulukya's formal sovereignty over the country—a legitimacy which the father-son duo never went so far as to challenge. Thus, justifying through supernatural intervention the series of events that would lead to the elevation of the Vāghelās to *de facto* rulers of the whole of Gujarat (and which ultimately resulted in the dynasty's takeover of the Caulukya rule under Vīradhāvala's son Viśaladeva) appears as a sensible choice for the poet to smooth over the problematic aspects of his historical narration.

Someśvara was not the first author of historical-biographical *kāvya* to use a divine vision to explain a controversial decision by his royal patron. He had a predecessor in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (VADC), where Vikrama is persuaded by a vision of Śiva to ascend the Cālukya throne in place of, and by entering military confrontation with, his elder brother Somadeva (VADC 6.62–66). But whereas Bilhaṇa treats this episode with extreme concision,

‘What is this that has befallen me, all opposite to glory?’ to him, who thus ruminating had fallen asleep, the Moon-crested god ordered:

‘My child, it is by me that you, the virtuous one, have been made to undertake this divine work. Why thus the swing of doubt makes your mind restless, o abode of steadiness?’

‘By now there is no auspiciousness whatsoever in your brother's enjoyment. For, the accumulation of merit, however old, is dissipated in a number of evil deeds.’

‘So, in this festival of the worlds, be the one with a bow strung for the destruction of enemies. Do you not remember that this your existence is in the world for killing the enemies of piety?’

Having heard this speech of the master of the world ... etc;¹⁵

¹⁵ *kim idam upanataṃ yaśovirodhi tridivagataḥ kim u vakṣyate pitā me | iti mana-*

Someśvara, in his work, reworks the episode into a lengthy and internally structured sequence, where the borrowing from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* is made explicit through the recasting of imagery and rhetorical devices, whilst also being varied to suit the poet's ideological design.

The first of these two aspects emerges at the very beginning of the sequence. At the appearance of the *rājyalakṣmī* of Gujarat, Lavaṇaprasāda asks in surprise:

kasyāsi kāsi tvam ihāsi kasmād ... || KK 2.91 ||,

‘Whose [spouse or relative] are you, who are you, why are you here?’;

in a patent reworking of the *anuprāsa* uttered by Kālidāsa's Kuśa:

*kā tvam śubhe kasya parigraho vā kiṃ vā madabhyāgamakāraṇam te | ...
|| Ragh 16.8 ||*

‘Who are you, o fair one, or whose spouse, or, what is the cause of your visit to me?’;

The answers of the two divine women are also borrowed one from the other:

*he vīra vairidhvajinīgajendragañḍasthalikhaṇḍanakhaḍgacaṇḍa |
pratyarthisārthena kadarthyamānām jānihi mām gūrjararājyalakṣmīm
|| KK 2.92 ||*

‘Oh hero by whose sword the temples of regal war elephants are shattered!
Know me to be the royal fortune of Gujarat, tormented by the opportunism of the enemies’;

*si nidhāya jātānidraṃ nṛpatanayaṃ śasīmaulir ādideśa || 62 || tvam iha mahati vatsa
devakārye nanu guṇavān avatārito mayeva | taralayati mudhā vikalpadola kim iti
manas tava suddhadhairiyadbhāmnaḥ || 63 || sapadi na śubham asti bhogabetos tilapa-
rimāṇam api tvadagrajasya | iha hi vihitabbhūriduṣkṛtānām vīgalati puṇyacayaḥ purā-
tano 'pi || 64 || bhava bhuvanamahotsave tad atra praṇaḍhanuḥ paripanthinām
prathāme | smarasi na kim iti sthitis tavaiśā nanu bhuvi dharmavirodhinām vadhāya ||
65 || girim iti sa nīsamya viśvabhartur ... etc. || 66 ||*

tam abravīt sā guruṇānavadyā yā nītapaurā svapadonmukhena |
tasyāḥ purāḥ saṃprati vitanāthāṃ jānīhi rājann adbhidevatām mām
|| Ragh 16.9 ||

To him she replied: ‘O king! Know me to be the tutelary deity, now bereft of a husband, of that unblemished city whose citizens have been carried away by her lord, eager to depart elsewhere.’

But it is in the later part of the *Kīrtikaumudī* sequence,

nirantaram sañcaratām gajānām yā diṇḍimair uḍḍamarā dbvanadbhiḥ |
ekākinī nātriṣu gūṛjarānām sā pūtkarotiva śivārutaiḥ pūḥ || KK 2.102 ||
krīḍāvatīnām nagarāṅganānām vaktraiḥ sadā yatra sarojasattā |
saras tad aśrūni kiraty anātham vātāstapāthahḥkanakaitavena || KK 2.103 ||

‘As elephants incessantly trample it, once resounding with the beat of drums, at night the city, bereft of the Gūṛjara people, seems to pant with the cries of jackals.’

‘Once ever-blooming with those lotuses that were the faces of the playful women, the lake now sheds tears in the form of drops swept away by the wind.’

that the visual imagery of dilapidated buildings and neglected water pools, deserted by human presence, distinctly reveals the influence of the *Raghu-vaṃśa* passage.¹⁶

As for the second aspect, it emerges by focusing on the literary material, in Someśvara’s work, that is *not* borrowed from Kālidāsa, and observing how its insertion complements the ideological scope of the passage. Two points are worth noting. Firstly, as noted above, Someśvara inserts the sequence within a broader *vaṃśānucarita* of the Caulukya and Vāghelā dynasties, which occupies the first half of *sarga* 2. Notably, the *vaṃśa* is resumed within the *rājyalakṣmī*’s speech, where she recalls the greatness of the kings and ministers preceding Bhīma’s rule, lamenting their demise: Āmaśarma is dead, gone is the son of Muñjala (2.97), Pratāpamalla Rāṣṭrakūṭa is no longer (2.98), and so on. Unlike Kālidāsa’s decaying Ayo-dhyā, Someśvara’s account of withering Gujarat consists not only of nostalgic reminiscences of crowded pathways and luxurious gardens, but also of miniatures of statesmen of yore, whose legacy is not duly borne by the con-

¹⁶ Compare Ragh 16.12 and 16.13 respectively.

temporaries. Secondly, it is worth observing how the sequence is introduced in the *Kīrtikaumudī*. The *vaṃśa* of the Vāghelā dynasts ends with a verse in praise of Lavaṇaprasāda (KK 2.82). A change in metre, from *vaktrā* to *upajāti*, marks the transition.¹⁷ The next verse opens the *rājyalakṣmī* sequence, but in a manner that radically diverges from Kālidāsa's original. Lavaṇaprasāda wakes in the middle of the night: *athaikadā ... nīśāvasāne na nīśatabuddhiḥ prābudhyata śrīlavanaprasādaḥ* (KK 2.83). The king summons his son Vīradhāvala and his *purohita*, the poet Someśvara himself, and recounts the dream from which he has just awakened: while on a trip to a hill sanctuary of Śiva, absorbed in meditation after praising the god and obtaining his *darśana*, the king had the vision of the divine maiden, dressed in white garments, holding a garland in her hands (KK 2.87ff.). Thus, the deity's vision and her speech here assume an analeptic form; all the more strikingly, they are recounted by Lavaṇaprasāda explicitly as his own dream. Ostensibly, the poetising historian Someśvara was exerting some caution in handling an issue of royal legitimation which, when the *Kīrtikaumudī* was being composed, still represented a matter of debate to his courtly audience. At the same time, the historicising poet Someśvara here offers his own interpretation of the very *Raghuvamśa* episode he draws upon: what Kuśa saw, perhaps, was not real; his *nagaradevatā*, like Lavaṇaprasāda's *rājyalakṣmī*, might have belonged to the realm of imagination.

More variations by inclusion of new literary material can be observed in Bālacandra's *Vasantavilāsa*,¹⁸ and in the successive South Indian reworkings of the motif, often with similar outcomes. One example is the use of aural, alongside visual, imagery to evoke the sense of devastation of the respective scenarios. Whereas this element is practically absent in the *Raghuvamśa*, and occurs only once in Someśvara (KK 2.102, *vide supra*), it becomes prominent in Bālacandra, Gaṅgādevī and Nārayaṇa. For example, the crippled god Dharma bewails to Vastupāla how,

saṃgītānādaḥ śrutiśuktipēyaḥ śreyaskaro 'jāyata yatra pūrvam |
tatrādbhunā duḥsamayānubhāvāc caityeṣu kaṣṭaṃ karaṭās caṭanti
 || VV 9.31 ||

¹⁷ On Someśvara's choice of metres see also Warder (2004, 632, § 6955).

¹⁸ Vastupāla's vision (VV 9.1–34) is the last of three reiterations of the trope, after VV 1.70–73 (goddess Sarasvatī exhorting the poet to compose the work) and VV 3.70–74 (Kumārāpāla appearing to Bhīma, paralleling SS 3.1ff.). Thus, the explicit reworking from the *Raghuvamśa* here also serves to underscore the episode's importance.

‘In the sanctuaries, where once auspicious strains of music soared to be drunk by the ears, there now, alas!, with the arrival of hard times, the crows screech.’

Gaṅgādevī’s *nagaradevatā*, too, laments that under the Turuṣka rule in Madhurā,

mukharāṇi purā mṛdaṅgaghoṣair abbato devakulāni yāny abbūvan |
tumulāni bhavanti pheravāṇāṃ ninadais tāni bhayaṅkarair idānīm
|| MV 8.5 ||

‘Once resounding everywhere with the roar of drums, the temple pavilions now echo with the fearful cries of jackals.’

In the *Rāghavendravidyā*, in turn, Sarasvatī dreads that

chātrāgāraṃ śaśvad ekapṛakāraṃ vedodgḥoṣair vaidikānām udāraṃ |
gomāyūnām jalpakānām ajasraṃ kārāgāraṃ sarvadeśe tadānīm
|| RV 6.57 ||

‘The monastery halls, always resounding with the unison chants of Vedic priests, everywhere would then become gaols for chattering jackals.’

Elsewhere it is the meta-literary reference that characterises the dystopian landscape, hinting at a debacle that is not just political, but intellectual and moral:

jainendravaīṣeṣikasāṃkhyabauddhanaiyāyikā jaiminayaś ca ye ’mī |
te samprataṃ darśanikāḥ kva yāntu kadambyamāne mayi duryugena
|| VV 9.32 ||

‘Jainas, Vaiṣeṣikas, Sāṃkhyas, Buddhists, Naiyāyikas and the Jaiminīyas: where shall these philosophers go, as I am tormented by the hard times?’

na tathā kaṭugbhūtkṛtād vyathā me hṛdi jīrṇopavaneṣu ghūkalokāt |
parīśīlitapārasīkavāgḥbho yavanānām bhavane yathā śukebhyaḥ || MV 8.12 ||

‘There is no agitation in my chest over a crowd of owls emitting shrill calls in a deserted grove, as there is over the parrots of the palace uttering Pārasika words learned from the Yavanas.’

vaktrī viṣṇor uttamatvaṃ kathā yā bhūpālāṇāṃ bhāti vidvatsabbhāyām |
śakter bhāṇoḥ śaktipāṇer gaṇeśaśakrādiṇāṃ dbūrjaṭer vā tadā syāt
 || RV 6.56 ||

‘The speech proclaiming the supremacy of Viṣṇu, glowing in the learned assemblies of the kings, would then be dedicated to the Goddess, the Sun, Skandha, Gaṇeśa or Indra, or even Śiva.’

In Someśvara’s reworking of the sequence, the narrative is markedly political; more specifically, it is *dynastic*: hence the insertion of a *vamśa* as part of the goddess’s wail. In Bālacandra, Nārāyaṇa, and to some extent Gaṅgādevī, the meta-literary element (the disoriented philosophers, the variation on the *kāvya* trope of the talking birds, the *vidvatsabbhās* leaning towards heresy) underlines a *doctrinal* point: what is at stake, in the respective lamentations, is not only the political integrity of a country, but the survival of a socio-cultural universe.

6. Conclusions: poeticised history repeats itself?

What the divine visions in the *Madhurāvijaya* and the three *kāvyas* analysed above—Someśvara’s *Kīrtikaumudī*, Bālacandra’s *Vasantavilāsa* and Nārāyaṇa’s *Rāghavendrāvijaya*—have in common is the retooling of an explicitly borrowed motif into a structural component of the historical narrative. Turning back to the descriptions of seasons, garden sports and moments of the day, we observe a similar approach. In all four works, sequences of descriptive passages are positioned within the narration to mark a significant turning point in the life of the respective protagonists. As we have seen, in the *Madhurāvijaya* the descriptive passages in *sargas* 5–7 divide the two military enterprises of Kampana. In the *Kīrtikaumudī*, the *Vasantavilāsa* and the *Rāghavendrāvijaya*, analogous sections (KK 6–7; VV 6–8; RV 5.23ff.) divide a first narrative arc, focusing on the secular achievements of the respective protagonists, from a second in which their entrepreneurship is put to the service of religious piety (the Jaina *saṅgha* in Vastupāla’s biographies, the Mādhva *sampradāya* for Rāghavendra).

These sequences, on the other hand, are fitted into a broader narrative structure that diverges significantly from the literary model to which they originally belonged—the grand *mahākāvya* on epic themes in the fashion of

Bhāravi, Māgha and their epigones.¹⁹ All four works, in fact, exhibit different shared structural features: a proem in the beginning, unlike the *vastunirdeśa* opening of Bhāravi; a reduced number of *sargas*, generally less than twenty and often no more than one dozen; finally, a teleological construction of the narration, starting from the protagonist's ancestry, birth and upbringing (or ancestry and call to service, as in the case of Vastupāla) and tending towards a climactic point in his life (Kampana's victory over the Turuṣkas, Vastupāla's pilgrimage, Rāghavendra's apotheosis as he is revered by men, animals and gods while attending a *vidvatsabhā*).

This creative synthesis of borrowed imagery, structures and stylistic choices reflects a concern with the question of form in historical narration that characterises much second-millennium historical-biographical *kāvya*. Just as with the borrowed motif of the divine vision, we can trace this concern, throughout the entangled (and, as I point out in my closing note to this essay, largely underexplored) patterns of trans-regional circulation of texts and forms of medieval *kāvya*, to Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. As already observed by McCrea (2010), Bilhaṇa is the earliest royal biographer to markedly diverge from the episodic *ākhyāyikā* form, exemplified by Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (and recast in verse in Padmagupta's *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*) and to initiate a distinct form of biographical *mahākāvya*. Analysing the structure of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (VADC), we find two formal components of this reinvention that we have seen in the four historical-biographical *kāvyas* analysed above. The first, the retooling of descriptive sequences into transitions in the narrative, emerges in *sargas* 7–12 of Bilhaṇa's work. In VADC 7, the description of spring leads into Vikrama's marriage (VADC 8–9), followed by a description of garden sports, sunset, moonrise and night pleasures (VADC 10–11), the couple's entry in Kalyāṇi (VADC 12) and another description of summer and water games (VADC 12). The whole block serves as a hinge between Vikrama's first series of military operations, against Someśvara and the Coḷa kings (VADC 5–6), and his campaign against Jayasiṃha. The latter is introduced by a description of monsoon (VADC 13) which, while setting the emotional tone for Vikrama's pain in the face of his task—a second fratricidal war in the name of the *raison d'état*—also marks the right time for the preparation of a military action (VADC 14–15), which, as per tradition, takes place in autumn.

¹⁹ See Jacobi 1889; Smith 1985, 7ff. A comprehensive discussion on the later borrowings of the structure of Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, lacking so far, besides Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* and Ratnākara's *Haravijaya* should include Śivasvāmi's *Kapphinābhyaudaya* and Maṅkha's *Śrikanṭhacarita*.

The second formal innovation is the adoption of a narrative structure that, as we have observed above, closely mirrors the cycle of King Raghu in the *Raghuvaṃśa*: an account of the protagonist's ancestry, his conception, birth and upbringing, and a first military exploit (Raghu's battle against Indra, Vikrama's war on Someśvara and the Coḷas) followed by one or more descriptive sequences, leading to a resumption of the plot with a second, major military enterprise (Raghu's *digvijaya*, Vikrama's campaign against Jayasiṃha). We see the same structure in the *Madhurāvijaya*: Kampana's ancestry (MV 1.26–42; Ragh 1.11–33), birth and upbringing (MV 2–3.18; Ragh 3.1–33)²⁰ and the conquest of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam (MV 4; Ragh 3.52–61) are followed by a descriptive section (MV 5–7; Ragh 4.14–24) leading to a resumption of the plot with the *nagaradevatā* episode and the final victory over the Turuṣkas (MV 8–9; Ragh 4.25ff.). Within this framework, Gaṅgādevī interweaves material borrowed from a vast array of further literary models.²¹ Thus, the sequence of descriptive passages in *sargas* 5–7, while looking to Bhāravi and Māgha, can be considered as an expansion on the autumn description in the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Similarly, Kampana's portrayal as an adolescent, formally modeled as a *nakhaśikhavarṇana* in the fashion of Bāṇa, vastly draws on Raghu's description in Ragh 3.32–34. The descriptions of King Bukka and his capital Vidyānagara (MV 1.43–67) and Kampana's horse (MV 4.20–29), similarly evoke analogues both in the *Raghuvaṃśa* and, for example, Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* and Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhibīyacarita*.²²

These observations allow a further consideration about the *kavipraśaṃsā* in MV 1.4–15. As I have mentioned, reading the passage as a straightforward enumeration of literary models eludes, and, as we have seen,

²⁰ See also Mudigonda (1989, 103) and Sudyka (2013, 47ff.).

²¹ It goes beyond the scope of this essay to discuss non-literary influences on Sanskrit historical-biographical *kāvya*, e.g., from *vaṃśas* and inscriptions. However, it is worth mentioning one case of borrowing from inscriptional poetry: in MV 1.26, *āsīt samastasāmantāmastakanyāstaśāśanaḥ ... rājā* finds an equivalent in the Gadag inscription of Vīra Ballāḷa Hoysaḷa (verse 2: *devaḥ samastasāmantamaskanyāstaśāśanaḥ ...* (Hultzs 1902, 89–97). It, in turn, recalls Somadeva's KSS 12,17.3: *āsīt sakalabhūpālamastakanyāstaśāśanaḥ ... rājā*.

²² Compare e.g. MV 1.36 and 1.65 with Kād. *avagaṇayya nārāyaṇavakṣaḥsthala-vasatisukham ... ālīngito lakṣmyā* and *yasyāñcānivr̥ttir maṇidīpānam ... asīnām* (Thakur 1960, 166ff.), and MV 1.45 with NC 2.86. Also from the *Kādambarī* is borrowed King Bukka's didactic discourse (MV 3.19–44), moulded after Śukanāsa's advice to Prince Candrapīḍa (see Subrahmaṇyaśāstrī 1969, 164ff. and Mudigonda 1989, 105–106). On the horse description see Mudigonda (1989, 114–115) and Sudyka (2013, 156–157).

potentially misleads, our efforts to identify Gaṅgādevī's literary models. Furthermore, it largely restricts our ability to interpret the poetess's self-conscious approach to the practice of creative borrowing. Instead, we could read the *kavīpraśaṃsā* through the eyes of Gaṅgādevī herself: namely, an author who situates her work within a lineage of borrowed forms and practices, and with this in mind deploys her praise of literary forebears (itself, in fact, a borrowing from Bāṇa's proem to the *Harṣacarita*). Thus, the invocation of Bhāravi (MV 1.9) may allude to the broader tradition of authors who adopted the clustering of descriptive passages as a formal feature—Māgha and Ratnākara, to name Gaṅgādevī's main models. Likewise, the reference to Bāṇa (MV 1.8) may implicitly acknowledge Śrīharṣa, from whom the poetess borrows passages which, in turn, suggest the former's influence.²³

Extending this analysis to the broader development of historical-biographical *kāvya* through the late medieval and early modern periods²⁴ reveals a recurrent adoption of the narrative structure analysed above, along with a common tendency towards the borrowing of imagery and motifs and similar creative strategies of retooling them into functional elements of the historical narrative. This convergence of formal and stylistic features underscores a renewed attitude towards the nature and practice of historical writing that spans from Bilhaṇa to Vijayanagara and post-Vijayanagara South India, ultimately pointing to the development of a common mode of historical narration throughout second-millennium Sanskrit *kāvya* production.

A closing note: Some philological considerations

Close reading of Sanskrit historical-biographical *kāvyas* from two different contexts—Someśvara's and Bālacandra's thirteenth-century Gujarat, Gaṅgādevī's and Nārāyaṇa's late medieval South India—highlights a number of common features: structural parallels, shared motifs and imagery and a pervasive tendency towards literary borrowing. One striking example is the central section of the *Vasantavilāsa*, that anticipates the structure em-

²³ See e.g. Jani 1957, 264ff.

²⁴ Compare, e.g., Rājanātha Ḍiṇḍima's *Acyutarāyābhyaudāya* or Yajñanārāyaṇa's *Sābityaratnākara*. Demonstrating the pervasiveness of such formal choices in second-millennium *kāvya*, similar structures also feature in non-historical biographies, such as Haricandra's *Dharmaśarmābhyaudaya* and (pseudo-)Buddhaghoṣa's *Padyacūḍāmaṇi* (see, respectively, Jacobi 1889 and Franceschini 2018).

ployed by Gaṅgādevī in her work: a cycle of seasons (VV 6; MV 5), flower picking and water sports (VV 7; MV 6), sunset, moonrise and the night (VV 8; MV 7), setting the stage for a divine vision (god Dharma in VV 9; the *nagaradevatā* in MV 8).

To what extent can the observation of such similarities lead us in reconstructing direct exchanges among these authors and works? This question confronts us with the challenge of analysing the critical fortunes of lesser circulated works, about which neither the otherwise generous corpus of commentaries and anthologies, nor the paleographic sources provide us with sufficient clues. Throughout this essay, I have largely avoided it by focusing on the shared *approach* of these authors to the ‘historicising’ practice of literary borrowing. However, I would like to propose here two observations that could serve as a basis for future research.

First, the circulation of historical-biographical *kāvya*s from Gujarat in medieval South India can be inferred, to a certain extent, from the mention of their authors in anthologies. Verses by Someśvara and his contemporary Arisimha, well attested ever since Jalhaṇa’s *Sūktimuktāvalī*, also appear in early Vijayanagara era in Sūrya’s *Sūktiratnāhara* and Sayana’s *Subhāṣitasudhanidhi* (Sternbach 1978–1980, s.v.). Additionally, Jalhaṇa’s citation of verses from Someśvara’s epigraphic *praśāstis* suggest a perpetuation of the poet’s fortunes as an inscriptional panegyrist (Sandesara 1953, 51–52).

Second, an interesting case of literary borrowing in the *Madhurāvijaya* allows, in my opinion, to suppose a circulation of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Gujarati Jaina materials within Gaṅgādevī’s literary milieu. In MV 3.5, the poetess recasts an expression from the *Śiśupālavadha*, where Kṛṣṇa recognises Nārada, gradually emerging from a beam of divine light:

[...] *vibhur vibhaktāvayavam pumān iti kramād amum nārada ity abodhi saḥ* || Śiś 1.3 ||

[...] the lord recognised him, as his body was taking full shape, as a human, then gradually as Nārada.

Gaṅgādevī employs a similar choice of words to describe the adolescent Kampana’s transition from childhood to adulthood:

*sa navyatārūnyanirastaśaiśavo vibhur vibhaktāvayavo vyarājata |
vasantanirdhātatuṣāramaṇḍalaḥ patir dinānām iva tivrādīdhitih*
|| MV 3.5 ||

That lord in whom youth had overcome childhood, as his body was taking full shape, shone like the sun in full bright when spring melts the frost sheet.

The *bahuvrīhi vibhaktāyava*, referring to the object complement *amum* in the original, here is shifted to the nominative to agree with the subject *vibhur*. Strikingly, a similar borrowing of Śiś 1.3, also in a description of adolescence and with yet another subtle shift in the morphosyntactic concordance, appears in a hagiography of King Ṛṣabha appended to Hemacandra's *Svopajñavṛtti* on *Yogaśāstra* 1.10:

bālyam kalyaṁ ivollaṅghya madhyamdinam ivāryamā |
vibhur vibhaktāyavaṁ dvitīyaṁ śiśriye vayah || verse 17 ||

Having crossed childhood like the sun dawn reaching midday, the lord entered the second age, in which the body takes full shape.

As Qvarnström (1999; 2002, 6) has demonstrated, Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* influenced Mādhava's discussion on Jainism in the *Sarvadarśana-samgraha*. This allows the contention of a wider circulation of the text in early Vijayanagara South India, which may have brought it, and its *Vṛtti*, into contact with our poetess. Further research into this hypothesis may shed more light on the transmission of the historical-biographical form from thirteenth-century Gujarat to fourteenth-century South India.

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A Translation of the *Sujanadurjanavivarāṇa*, the Second Chapter of Maṅkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*

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In this short essay I will introduce my translation of the second chapter of an understudied work of medieval Sanskrit *kāvya*, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* of Maṅkha (sometimes also referred to as Maṅkhaka). This chapter provides a crucial witness to the intellectual life of poetry in medieval Kashmir, and, by extension, can throw some light on the debates surrounding the history of *kāvya* within elite circles. The reason for introducing a translation here instead of an essay exploring some aspect of the text perhaps deserves some explanation. While it is certainly a good thing to have more translations of Sanskrit *kāvya* available to the scholarly community, to read, refer to, correct and debate, I here present this translation as an argument in itself about *kāvya*'s place in the intellectual and cultural life of Sanskrit South Asia. As such, I hope to present this text not only as *kāvya*, but as about *kāvya*. Instead of relying solely upon the erudite discourses within the *alaṃkāraśāstra* tradition, *kāvya* itself can tell its own story and provide lenses to read its historical, ethical, philosophical and aesthetic concerns. In this chapter, Maṅkha writes poetry as theory, and as such can provide modern scholars of the Sanskrit literary tradition a way to think 'with' the poet, rather than relying upon *alaṃkāraśāstra* theorisations or comparisons to poetic practice in western poetic traditions. In particular, Maṅkha's second chapter lays out a moral economy for poetry, delineates its social practice, and gives some idea of its historical imaginary.

Before turning to the translation of Mañkha, some words of introduction are in order. This chapter thus introduces Sanskrit poetry, almost always called *kāvya*, its practice, and its ideal audience. The colophons call the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*'s second chapter the *Sujanadurjanavivarnaṇa*, 'The Exposition of Good and Bad People.' Before beginning the description of the main events of the poem, Mañkha lays out who poetry is for, what poetry does, and how it is to be judged. The good and bad people of the title provide the basic ethical binary which informs the chapter: Mañkha argues that poetry is an ethical stance in solidarity with good people (*sat*, *sajjana*) and that it is constantly in danger of being overcome by the machinations of bad people (*durjana*, *khala*). The very existence of bad people demands constant vigilance by the good. For Mañkha, it is necessary to describe the ideal social position of poetry, how good poets work, and how good people are necessary to judge them before introducing what makes poetry good.

The framing of poetry and its crisis in its social/ethical context mirrors the plot of the *mahākāvya* itself. This twelfth-century poem describes the deeds of Śrīkaṇṭha Śiva, particularly his burning of the Triple-City of the demons. This is the ultimate triumph of the good over the wicked, and in this sense this poem is a religious act of devotion to Śiva. However, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* is more than a hymn, it is also a courtly elite *mahākāvya*, deeply conversant with its tropes, conventions, and ideologies, in a word its history. Its twenty-five chapters contain beauties and treasures that are just beginning to be appreciated, and scholars are just now beginning to pay more careful attention to the text and its contents.¹ Most of the scholarship on the poem has focused on two chapters in particular: his description of Kashmir in book three to his account of the occasion of the poem's first performance in book twenty-five. These two books in particular show that Mañkha was aware of his own position in the world and sought to frame his story of Śiva's heroic exploits within his own lived geography and biography. In this, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* challenges the very image of the Sanskrit *kāvya*, being very self-aware of its own place and time. Unlike other *mahākāvyas* that famously eschew any particularity which might allow them to be placed or specified, chapters three and twenty-five each in their own way bring surprising and new contexts to the standard *mahākāvya* form. However, rather than seeing Mañkha's innovations in the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* as strange growths on an otherwise perfectly standard decorative tree, I argue that Mañkha, in his innovations, was merely being more explicit concerning the

¹ In particular, the recent works Kashi Gomez (2016), Chiara Livio (2017, 2019, 2020), and Walter Slaje (2015), have begun to throw light on this important text. I am grateful to all of them for conversations about Mañkha over the years.

complex relationships that underlie poetry and its performance. By placing his work in the geography of Kashmir and showing its reception among Kashmir's elites, more than many (or perhaps any) other *mahākāvya*s, Maṅkha consciously embeds his poem in the social fabric of its time. Since the second chapter is a reflection on the role of poetry in its elite context, it can give clues as to how its author wanted his audience to read the text as a whole.

The second chapter of the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* directly anticipates the innovations of the third and twenty-fifth chapters since it provides the social, moral, and aesthetic criteria upon which the rest of the work is based. While these two later chapters root the poem, its inception and its reception in the lived elite context of twelfth-century Kashmir, the second chapter presents the intellectual justification for poetry by laying out the ideal poet and audience. In short, the *Sujanadurjanavivarāṇa* provides the 'theory' upon which the later parts of the poem are based. It is here that Maṅkha sketches a vision of the relationship between poetry, poet, audience, and world. Given that it is embedded in the *mahākāvya*, Maṅkha's ideas are an important addition, or perhaps corrective, to theorisations of poetry based solely on *śāstric* texts. While other explorations of the 'life of poetry' concentrate on *alaṃkāraśāstra*-based claims about what poetry is, a careful reading of Maṅkha's second chapter provides a theorisation of what poetry *does*, and in particular what Maṅkha hopes to do in the course of his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*. In broadest terms, this chapter begins by praising good poets and censuring bad poets. It continues to define what good poetry is and how to recognise it. These poetic concerns are intimately tied to ethical ones: good poets make good poetry for good people and wicked people must be identified and counteracted.

To achieve these goals, Maṅkha's *Sujanadurjanavivarāṇa* divides into two sections. The first (vv. 1–26) concerns itself with good and bad people and their relationship to poetic refinement and judgment. The second (vv. 27–58), lays out the requisites of a great poet and the attributes of great poetry. While I draw these broad distinctions, Maṅkha's text is not so cut and dried, often topics and themes appear in each of the two sections. For instance *vakratā* or *vakrima* meaning 'indirect language' (lit. 'crookedness'), Maṅkha's key characteristic of great poetry, is introduced in vv. 11–15, in the center of the discussion of good and bad people. It reappears again at the center of the second portion, especially in vv. 30, 34, and 44–47. In such a way this structure is both complicated and enriched by the centrality of indirect language to both the aesthetic discernment of good and bad people and to actual poetic practice.

To understand Mañkha's interests and preoccupations, I will point out a few verses and contextualise them within the context of Sanskrit poetry in general and Mañkha's poetic practice in particular. I begin by showing how Mañkha positions the poet, continue by looking at his conceptualisation of the good and the wicked, and finally lay out the general attributes of good poetry he adumbrates. This will hopefully serve as an entry into the entirety of the text translated here.

To begin, appropriately enough, at the beginning, his second chapter commences with a benediction that, while seemingly simple, serves to position his entire explication of poet, audience and poetry. He writes:

*vitīrṇasikṣā iva hṛtpadastha-
sarasvatīvāhanarājahaṃsaiḥ |
ye kṣīranīnapravibhāgadakṣā
vivekinas te kavayo jayanti || 2.1 ||*

Skilled in separating milk from water,
As if taught by the regal geese
Who bear Sarasvatī, Goddess Learned Speech,
Remaining ever present in their hearts—
Victory to those discerning poets.

This verse relies on the trope that royal geese (*rājahaṃsas*), the most noble and discerning of birds, have the special ability of separating water and milk with their beaks. This same judicious acumen is ascribed to the best poets. This benediction states an ideal, and the rest of the chapter works to unpack what is necessary for a poet of discernment (*vivekin*). By implication, this miraculous feat must be noted and praised by a perceptive audience. In this case the true poet is a general or universal figure, whose genius can be instantiated in a particular poem but whose qualities conform to a set pattern. For Mañkha a great poet irrupts into history to bring about a revival of real poetry which would-be poets can merely approximate.

Mañkha's imagination of a poet in context is very much a creation of its own time. In contrast to Mañkha, seeing himself (as a true poet) as the fulfillment of the ideal, Kālidāsa, the exemplar of classical poetry rather positions himself at the end of a long decline. In his well-known *Raghuvamśa*, Kālidāsa introduces his work by taking a stance of humility and asking for forbearance from his implied audience:

*kva sūryaprabhavo vaṁśaḥ kva cālpaśayā matiḥ |
titīṣṣur dustaraṁ mohād uḍupenāsmi sāgaram || 1.2 ||
mandalaḥ kaviyaśaḥprārthī gamiṣyāmy upahāsyatām |
prāṁśulabhye phale lobhād udbahur iva vāmanaḥ || 1.3 ||*

How distant is that lineage arisen from the Sun
From my intellect of such limited scope—
I desire to traverse the unnavigable ocean
Beguiled in my delusion in a rickety raft.
Desiring the fame of a poet—the fool I am—
I will become a joke,
Like a dwarf with arms upraised greedily toward a fruit
Only to be reached by a giant.

Leaving aside the question of how seriously Kālidāsa's humility is to be taken, the differences between the stances of the poets are striking. While Kālidāsa takes on a first-person confessional mode and approaches the audience humbly, Maṅkha takes on a third person omniscient perspective, stating the ideal quality of the poet, discernment. The entire implied sociology of poetry also depends on a different relationship with the audience. Kālidāsa's obsequious self-disparagement is the complete opposite of Maṅkha's almost imperious tone. While Kālidāsa's poem gestures implicitly toward a great tradition of poetry to which he finds himself to be inferior and lacking, for Maṅkha, a true poet—here by implication Maṅkha himself—can revive the ideal of poetry. Toward the conclusion of the chapter he states:

*śabdārthānām pariṣad akhilā nityam ājñāvidheyā
dāsyam yasya śrayati purato bhrūlatāspandanena |
sa ślaghyaśrīr jagati kathitaś cakravartī kavīnām
śvetacchatracchavir upacitā kiṁ ca tasyaiva kīrtiḥ || 2.55 ||*

The entire assembly of words and meanings
subservient to his commands—They fall
Into line as slaves before him
at the quivering of his brow.
Given his laudable splendor, in the world
He is called the emperor of poets;
Is not his fame heaped up with the splendour
of a white parasol?

This restoration of Poetry's palace can be imagined as the victory to which he refers at the beginning of the poem. It has great implications for poetry itself, since it offers a revival of the great tradition of poetry which has been waning. Mañkha continues by showing the emperor of poets as a saviour/craftsman:

*śaithilyaspr̥śi saṁśayaāvahapade kṣodāsahiṣṇau kaveḥ
svairam tatra sarasvatī nivīśate kiṁ kāvyajīrṇaukasi |
yac chāstrakramaśilpakārubhir alaṁbhūṣṇuprakarṣaiḥ parair
nyastābhīḥ katham apy upaskṛtivacaḥsthūṇābhīḥ uttabhyate || 2.56 ||*

Would Sarasvatī willingly enter into the decayed house of poetry
That is well-nigh falling apart, a rickety building,
unable to bear any strain—
 like a poem with a loose construction,
 whose words carry doubtful meaning,
 unable to bear any examination?
That house of poetry could be shored up
By other skilled and competent craftsmen,
Who know the essence of the treatises,
With supports of language for adornment
Set up with some difficulty.

In these verses, Mañkha supplies the two sides of a true poet: his innate capacity and his craftsman-like training. This bookending of the poem provides the general thesis of the work: A true poet can reinstate poetry through the recognition of his innate capacity and his exemplary training. Mañkha's metaphor of the house in verse *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 2.56 can be placed in conversation with Kālidāsa's metaphor of the raft in *Raghuvamśa* 1.2. Kālidāsa's small raft (*udupa*) is meant only for him. For him the whole project of his great poem depends on his intellect which might not be up for the task at hand. Thus, Kālidāsa imagines his poetic power instrumentally as a means into the project which may or may not succeed. On the other hand, Mañkha's rickety construction is the edifice of poetry itself, which can be shored up and even restored by a poet's brilliance once activated in the world. While Kālidāsa sees the poet (in this case, himself) as a possibly insufficient means toward poetry, Mañkha sees the poet as the saviour of a poetic tradition grown weak. Mañkha's metaphor is also more clearly social; he is building a dwelling place for poetry, a place for poetry to reside in and interact with the world.

Maṅkha's theory of the social role of poetry depends not simply upon the excellence of a poet, rather the poet's accomplishment must be recognised as great by those who have both moral and social standing and true aesthetic appreciation. Maṅkha calls these upstanding men 'the Good,' *sat* or *sajjana*. These good people are always opposed to 'the Wicked,' *durjana* or *khala*. This relationship is not of course new, rather Maṅkha draws upon older discourses using these same terms in the Sanskrit poetic tradition. To illustrate how Maṅkha adopts and adapts the discourse of good and the wicked people, I briefly compare his introduction of good and bad people to one of the Kashmiri poets' favourite Sanskrit writers, Bāṇa.² In his *Kādambarī*, Bāṇa includes two verses outlining the relationship between the Good and the Wicked. Bāṇa writes:

kaṭu kvaṇanto maladāyakaḥ khalās tudanty alaṃ bandhanaśṛṅkhalā iva |
manas tu sādhubdhvanibhiḥ pade pade haranti santo maṇinūpurā iva || 6 ||
subhāṣitaṃ hāri viśaty adho galān na durjanasyārkaripor ivāmṛtam |
tad eva dhatte hrdayena sajjano harir mahāratnam ivātinirmalam || 7 ||

6. Wicked men, like iron fetters, make harsh sounds, leave marks, and are able to harm. On the other hand, the good, like anklets, enchant the mind with each word/step with their sweet sound.

7. Captivating speech does not enter farther than the throat of a bad person, like Ambrosia [does not enter farther than the throat of] the Enemy of the Sun (Rāhu). A good person places that very [speech] on his heart, like Hari (= Viṣṇu) [places] the great completely flawless gem [on his heart].³

Bāṇa uses two images from Vaiṣṇava mythology, that of the demon Rāhu trying to steal the immortal nectar and Viṣṇu's placing of the Kaustubha gem on his heart. Both of these allusions spring from a single cycle in Hindu *purāṇic* lore, the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. The gods and the demons call a brief truce and use Mount Mandara as their churning stick. From this colossal effort all the good things in the universe appear out of the foam and froth of the agitated ocean, including the Wish-Fulfilling tree, the Desire-Granting Cow, the Kaustubha Gem, and finally, the nectar of immortality itself.

² Aurel Stein points out in his introduction to the *Rājataranṅinī*, the Kashmiri poet Kalhaṇa, from the same time period as Maṅkha, was a close reader of Bāṇa's works.

³ Trans. Obrock, 'Abhinanda's *Kādambarīkathāsāra*,' 2012.

Bāṇa's allusion to the Churning of the Ocean of Milk poetry in a certain moral setting becomes the basis for Mañkha's discussion of good and bad people. Bāṇa (and as we will see in a moment, Mañkha) uses this story for several reasons: First, the performance of poetry occurs as part of an ever-present struggle of inimical and adversarial forces, which in the *purāṇic* model is exemplified by the gods and the demons and exists in the social world as the good (*sat*) or good people (*sajjana*) and bad people (*durjana*) or rogues (*khala*). Second, the implicit acknowledgement that poetry is effort. Third, that good poetry demands a spirited (and perhaps violent) defense, just as does the production of the Nectar of Immortality. Bāṇa's discussion puts all of these aspects together. Mañkha too looks to the story of Rāhu and expands it in his work. He writes:

*kāvyāmṛtaṃ durjanarāhūnitaṃ
prāpyaṃ bhaven no sumanojanasya |
saccakram avyājavirājamāna-
taikṣṇyaprakarṣaṃ yadi nāma na syāt || 2.2 ||*

Now if the circle of educated men
Did not foreground their fierce intellect,
Resplendent and unpretentious
Then for the wise, the nectar of poetry
Once taken away by the wicked
Would be irrecoverable; just as
If Viṣṇu's discus had not its sharpened edge
as its greatest virtue, shining and true,
Then for the gods, the sap of immortal life
Stolen by the eclipse-demon Rāhu
Could not be gained again.

This verse is an extended metaphor in which different members of a compound are equated with one another. Rather than trying to work this into a single translation, I have chosen here to 'unravel' the double meanings and translate two broadly parallel sentences linked by their implicit comparison. For instance, Mañkha's *kāvyāmṛta* means 'the immortal nectar that is poetry' and *durjanarāhu* means 'the demon Rāhu who is wicked people.' While this careful metaphorical structure is clear through the first half of the verse, in the second this metaphorical pairing becomes more and more blurred into a figure that more resembles *samāsokti* than *rūpakasamāsa*. For instance, to read Mañkha's *saccakra* in *pāda* c as a *rūpakasamāsa* would give

the translation 'Viṣṇu's discus which is good people.' However it seems that there is a paranomasia or *śleṣa* here. It must be read twice as 'the circle (=gathering) of good people' and 'Viṣṇu's discus.' Maṅkha's verse shows an amplification of the ideas in Bāṇa. Where Bāṇa relies on simile, Maṅkha begins with a metaphor (*rūpaka*) and ends with a *śleṣa*, in which the very mythological story of Rāhu is invoked with the same words used to describe the constant battle between the good and the wicked. Maṅkha continues in this vein:

*sadaiva satsaṃgamasamṃmukho 'pi
khalah svacaryāṃ na jahāti jātu |
kṛtvāpi sūryāśrayaṇaṃ prayatnād
rāhur gataḥ kiṃ vibudhatvayogam || 2.3 ||*

Even if always constantly present
at gatherings of good folk, still a bad man
never abandons his own conduct ever.
After much exertion, Rāhu reached the sun's sphere.
Did he then become one of the gods?

Here too the story of Rāhu is not a simile, rather it is the cosmic model that constantly reenacts itself in the practice of poetry. While Bāṇa described what wicked, uneducated critics were *like*, Maṅkha here outlines the structure of poetic appreciation. The agonistic aspect, highlighted in his verses, imagines poetic performance as a battle demanding the participation of an educated and involved audience. Much of the first half of the chapter fills out and explores the relationship between good and wicked people in the context of poetic performance. It is noteworthy that after his benedictory verses praising the true and discerning poet, Maṅkha immediately turns his focus to the audience, to those who would hear and judge the poem. It is only after a long exploration of this theme that occupies the majority of the first half of the chapter that Maṅkha returns again to the poet. The *Sujanaḍurjanavivarāṇa* implicitly argues that poetry first depends on its audience who are educated enough to judge it and self-confident enough to defend it. As the text states:

*tattadvicāropaniṣadvimṛṣṭaṃ
kāvyam kaveḥ puṣyati nistuṣatvam |
na ratnam āyāti hi nirmalatvam
śāṇopalāropanam antareṇa || 2.7 ||*

A poet's poetry becomes refined,
free from chaff, once processed
by academic knowledge in conversations;
jewels do not become stainlessly pure
without being placed on a whetstone.

Thus this community of learned people of good moral standing is necessary for the production and promulgation of real poetry.

After describing the contentious relationship between good and bad people, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* shifts its focus to the poet, and specifically what makes him capable of great poetry. Here, Maṅkha deploys the vocabulary that had been perfected in the theoretical literature and elaborates on the common idea that poets need both an innate ability, an inner genius, *pratibhā*, and a strong understanding rooted in a traditional poetic education, *vyutpatti*. He introduces this idea with the image of the poet as the son of Sarasvatī, Goddess of Poetry:

*sarasvatīmātur abhūc ciraṃ na yaḥ
kavitvapāṇḍityaghaṇastanaṃdhayaḥ |
kathaṃ sa sarvāṅgam anāptasaṃbhavo
dinād dinam praḍbhiviśeṣam aśnute || 2.27 ||*

If he was not suckled as an infant
on those two, Poetry and Learning,
the ample breasts of Mother Sarasvatī,
Without having become hale and strong,
How could he attain a body
mature and self-confident?

Here *kavitva*, literally 'the state of being a poet' stands in for *pratibhā* and *pāṇḍitya* 'learning' stands in for *vyutpatti*. Much of the description of the poet revolves around the relationship between these two prerequisites for poetry. If one does not have *pratibhā*, his work will be dry and academic, if he does not have *vyutpatti*, his poetry will not have the proper gravitas. A correct integration of both is necessary for the poet's work to reach *praḍbhi*, 'maturity' or 'perfection.' Walter Slaje lays out the connections of the key terms from the Sanskrit poetical tradition succinctly in his treatment of Maṅkha's thought. He writes:

Zum Meisterdichter kann nach fester Überzeugung Maṅkhas nur werden,
wer über angeborene Begabung (*guṇa*) verfügt, d.h. wem die entsprechende

Befähigung (*śakti*) dazu auf natürliche Weise gegeben ist, die sich als dichterische Inspiration (*pratibhā*) manifestiert. Das allerdings ist nur die Voraussetzung. Durch Ausbildung (*vyutpatti*) und wiederholendes Durchdringen der erforderlichen Wissensgebiete (*śāstrakrama*) muß man seine Dichtergabe (*kavitva*) zur Perfektion (*prauḍhi*) entwickeln und kann sich erst danach an die Ausarbeitung einer geschlossenen Komposition (*prabandha*) wagen. (Slaje 2015, 21)

Slaje shows the way in which Maṅkha integrates a wholistic picture of the gifted poet. Yet, how do these qualities become manifest in an actual poetic work? How does the true poet's brilliance and learning manifest itself in language?

Maṅkha names the particular linguistic feature of poetry *vakratā* or *vakrīma*, which I translate as 'indirect language.' These words literally mean 'crookedness' and in the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* these terms are used to describe the type of language that strikes the audience as new and special. While *rasa* or 'aesthetic savour' also remains a key idea for Maṅkha, it seems that this is a bit too abstract. In the *Sujanadurjanavivarāṇa*, the term *vakratā* allows for a concrete way to speak about language as poetically potent rather than relying on the affective language of *rasa*. For Maṅkha, all of a poet's innate brilliance and education must be marshalled in the production of *vakratā*, which in itself is key to poetry and by extension the production of *rasa*. *Vakratā* in the second chapter should and must be the goal of poetry; if it is not present then all has been in vain. As Maṅkha writes:

vyutpattipratipatticañcur avacaḥsaṃcāravācaṃyamo
vakreṇaiva kalālavena kurute yaḥ kāvyam avyākulaḥ |
muktva varma vihāya karma ca samitkālocitaṃ so 'khiḷaṃ
viśvaṃ dārumayena jetum asinā saṃrambhato jṛmbhate || 2.46 ||

A poet who composes poetry, being
Accomplished through a good education,
And silent regarding things not to be spoken,
But not roused by even a small portion
Of the art known as indirect speech
Is a warrior who takes off his armour
And leaves aside all his battle gear
And, in his arrogance, starts out boldly
To conquer the whole world with a sword
made of wood.

Again, it is striking that this verse looks to the poet in the world: without *vakratā*, the poet is laughable in his proud march forward, just like a warrior with a wooden sword.

Here and throughout the first chapter, Mañkha invites the reader to think through poetry in the world, and what makes good poetry striking. The second chapter of Mañkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, the 'Exposition of Good and Bad People' sets the scene for the ethical and poetic vision of the rest of the work. Mañkha grounds his theory of poetry by thinking through poetry in the world. These few remarks are an invitation to read Mañkha's text and think 'with' the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* as an active participant in the theory of poetry.

Note on the translation

This is not a literal translation, although it tries to convey the meaning and image of Mañkha's verses. This is not a work of English poetry, although I have tried to give it some poetic form recognisable to modern readers. Those interested should also consult Walter Slaje's excellent German translation in his work *Bacchanal im Himmel und andere Proben aus Mañkha*, 2015.

Translation

Mañkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, Chapter Two:
Sujanadurjanavarṇana
The Description of Good and Bad People

*vitīrṇaśikṣā iva hr̥tpadastha-
sarasvatīvāhanarājahamsaiḥ |
ye kṣīranīrapravibhāgadakṣā
vivekīnas te kavayo jayanti || 2.1 ||*

Skilled in separating milk from water,
As if taught by the regal geese
Who bear Sarasvatī, Goddess Learned Speech,
Remaining ever present in their hearts—
Victory to those discerning poets.

*kāvyāmṛtaṃ durjanarāḥhunītaṃ
prāpyaṃ bhaven no sumanojanasya |
saccakram avyājavirājamāna-
taikṣṇyaprakarṣaṃ yadi nāma na syāt || 2.2 ||*

Now if the circle of educated men
Did not foreground their fierce intellect,
Resplendent and unpretentious
Then the nectar of poetry
Once taken away by the wicked
Would be irrecoverable for the wise
Just as if Viṣṇu's discus had not its sharpened edge
as its greatest virtue, shining and true,

Then the sap of immortal life
Stolen by the eclipse-demon Rāhu
Would be irrecoverable for the gods.

*sadaiva satsaṃgamasamṃmukho 'pi
khalalḥ svacaryāṃ na jahāti jātu |
kṛtvāpi sūryāśrayaṇaṃ prayatnād
rāhur gataḥ kiṃ vibudhatvayogam || 2.3 ||*

Even if always constantly present
at gatherings of good men, still the wicked
never would abandon his own conduct.
After much exertion, Rāhu reached the Sun's sphere.
Did he then become one of the gods?

*kasyāpi śaktiprabhavāt prabhāvād
udeti tat kāvyamahārahasyam |
kliṣṭo gurūṇāṃ sadaneṣu nityam
kaścid budhaś cetayate na vā yat || 2.4 ||*

From the power, sourced in the potential
of that special something,
The great secret of poetry rises,
Which a wise man, constantly wearied
in learned teachers' houses,
either gets or not.

*ajñātapāṇḍityarahasyamudrā
ye kāvyamārge dadhate 'bhimānam |
te gārudīyān anadhīya mantrān
bālābhalāsvādanam ārabhante || 2.5 ||*

Those who bring self-pride on to poetry's road,
Ignorant of learning's secret seal,
Taste lethal poison without reciting
Garuḍa's protective spells.

*tāny artharatnāni na santi yeṣāṃ
suvarṇasaṃghena ca ye na pūrṇāḥ |
te rītimātreṇa daridrakaalpā
yāntīśvaratvaṃ hi katham kavīnām || 2.6 ||*

Those who do not possess the best poetic meanings,
are as if not possessing costly jewels;
Those not filled up with an arrangement of good syllables,
are as if not filled up with masses of gold;
They are simply impoverished by their mere style,
as if impoverished by their mere brass coins.
How could they become masters of poetry?

tattadvicāropaniṣadvimṛṣṭam
kāvyaṃ kaveḥ puṣyati nistuṣatvam |
na ratnam āyāti hi nirmalatvam
śāṇopalāropanam antareṇa || 2.7 ||

A poet's poetry becomes refined,
free from chaff, once processed
by academic knowledge in conversations;
jewels do not become stainlessly pure
without being placed on a whetstone.

bahvarthasiddhā paripākabhūmiḥ
kasyāpi vānī rasavatya udeti |
āttaprayatnam bahavaḥ punanti
mukham yaducchiṣṭalavocayena || 2.8 ||

Accomplished in many meanings,
Grounded in its complete maturity,
The speech of a special poet
comes forth possessed of aesthetic savour.
Many purify their mouths, which had already made
some sort of effort, with the small crumbs
left over from his words.

sūktau śucāv eva pare kavīnām
sadyaḥ pramāḍaskhalitam labhante |
adbhautavastre caturam katham vā
vibhāvvyate kajjalabindupātaḥ || 2.9 ||

Even when a verse is perfect, immediately
would-be poets find petty lapses of attention.
On the other hand, would a drop of *kajjala*
be so shrewdly noted on an unwashed shirt?

avadyajambālagaveṣaṇāya
kṛtodyamānām khalasairibhāṇām |
kavīndravānnirjaranirjharīṇyām
saṃjāyate vyarthamanorathatvam || 2.10 ||

The water buffaloes of the wicked
Have made an effort to root up
The muck of blameworthy language
In the Unaging River Gaṅgā of poetic speech—
Yet it always comes to pass that
their desire is in vain.

kalaṅkaśūnyāpi rasappravāham
api sravantī vibudhopajīvyam |
vāṇī kim eṇāṅkakaleva dhatte
ṭaṅkaṃ vinā vakrīmavibhramēṇa || 2.11 ||

Would speech,
Even when it is empty of defects,
Even when it flows a flood of aesthetic savour,
upon which the wise subsist,
Bear a distinctive mark without the beauty
of indirect language?
In that same way the crescent
of the Antelope-Marked Moon
Bears its distinct beauty through the charm
of its slender curve.

vinā na sāhityavidā paratra
guṇaḥ kathaṃcit prathate kavīnām |
ālabate tatkṣaṇam ambhasīva
vistāram anyatra na tailabinduḥ || 2.12 ||

By no means does the quality of true poets
Unfold itself upon any other person,
Except one who knows literature,
Just as a drop of oil does not expand
Directly anywhere but upon the surface
of the water.

*sadvṛttaviśrāntimatī na jātu
kr̥cchre 'pi pātram paraṣākṣarāṇām |
satpunyabhājah satatānuvṛtā
kasyāpy aho sadgrhinīva vānī || 2.13 ||*

Speech reaches repose in good meters
As a good wife falls back upon good conduct.
Speech is never a vessel of harsh sounds
—even when expressing something difficult
As a good wife is never a vessel of harsh words,
—even in distressing times.
Ah! For that lucky poet who possesses goodness and merit,
Speech is always accommodating
Just as a good wife is always compliant.

*atyarthavakratvam anarthakaṃ yā
śūnyāpi sarvāṇyaguṇair vyanakti |
aspr̥śyatādūṣitayā tayā kiṃ
tucchaśvapucchacchaṭaye va vācā || 2.14 ||*

What is the use of that speech,
which even though completely empty
of all other good qualities,
manifests a useless over-the-top indirect language?
It is blamable through its untouchability (*aspr̥śyatā*),
Like the bristles on the tail of a dog,
Bent with no purpose.

*aśikṣitā yā prakṛte 'pi mārge
vāg īhate vakrapathapravṛttim |
pade pade paṅgur ivāpnuyāt kiṃ
anyad vinā sā skhalitopaghātāt || 2.15 ||*

Unlearned in the correct method, however clear,
and so impelled towards the path of figuration,
What else would that Speech obtain,
other than offence through its stuttering
at each and every word?
In the same way,
not knowing the road, even though it is well-made,
and so forced in a crooked path,

what would a lame man obtain,
other than injury through his stumbling
at each and every step?

*jihvā katham nāma khalasya mā bhūt
satām avicchinnabhayāgradūtī |
kṛtā hi tasyā vidhinaiṣva vṛttir
abharniṣaṃ paśūnapāśūpālyam || 2.16 ||*

May the tongue of a villain never in any way be
a harbinger of constant fear to the good.
For the creator himself made its job
to busy itself with malicious gossip day and night.

*dṛḍhaprārūḍhā śatapattrayoneḥ
kiyatya aho sādhuḥjane 'nukampā |
yo 'dyāpi vidyānavapakṣasaṅgaṃ
khalaplavaṅgasya na nirmimīte || 2.17 ||*

Isn't it amazing
how much deeply-rooted compassion
Brahmā, he hundred petaled lotus born,
has for good people?
He, up until now, did not bestow
new wings of knowledge to those leaping
mischievous monkeys, the wicked people.

*satām batāsādhur abādhito 'pi
baddhāvadhāno vidhurakriyāsu |
yatkrauryavādena jito 'hivargo
briyeva pātālatalaṃ viveśa || 2.18 ||*

Alas, even when unprovoked,
Evil people are intent upon wounding the good.
Snakes, overcome by rumour of their cruelty,
Retreated, as if in shame, to the Pātāla Underworld.

*nīcas tanotv aśru nitāntakārṣṇyaṃ
puṣṇātu sādharmaḥbhṛdañjanena |
vinā tu jāyeta katham tadīya-
kṣodena sārasvatadṛkprasādaḥ || 2.19 ||*

Let the lowly cause tears, let them encourage
the excessive blackness from the mascara
which bears a common property—
Since on the other hand how, without their agitation
Would the clarity of poetic vision come about?

*nigūḍhasaujanyaabhṛto 'pi kecit
pāruṣyam āhāryam anuplavante |
antaḥ sudhābandhuraso 'pi dhatte
bahir vapuḥ karkaśam ikṣukāṇḍaḥ || 2.20 ||*

Some people, although they hold a goodness
buried deep down inside, act out a superficial harshness.
Although having within the savour of immortal nectar,
Sugarcane has a rough and hard exterior.

*kiyaḍ batāyaṃ kalikālanāmā
prakampahetuḥ prathito himartuḥ |
khaliny akhaṇḍā rajanīva yasmin
sādhor dīnasyeva daridram āyuh || 2.21 ||*

Alas, how this winter season of snow is well-known
with the name of the Kali Age, the cause of shivering,
In which all of the bad people, like the night, are full
and lives of the good, like the days, are destitute.

*ekaḥ punar durjanasārameyair
dhr̥to guṇo 'yaṃ parasūktikoṣam |
vivikṣatām luṇṭhayitum bhaṣanti
yadagrataḥ kāvyamalimlucānām || 2.22 ||*

On the other hand, this one good quality belongs
to those dogs, those bad people:
They bark in the presence of those thieves of poetry,
Who desire enter in order to rob the treasury
of the well-turned verse of others.

*divyendrajālātīśayajñam etaṃ
sakhe nirīkṣasva khalaṃ sabhāsu |
vahnīm vinaivauṣadhimantratantram
mukhena yo durviśaṃ prasūte || 2.23 ||*

O friend, look at this crook in the assemblies
Who knows something superior to the divine magic of Indra!
He produces terrible fire from his mouth,
without any potions or magical mumbo-jumbo.

*anekaśo 'haṃ vimṛśann apūṭṭhaṃ
khalam na vedmi sthiraṃ asthiraṃ vā |
satyaṃ sthiraś cet kṣaṇasauhṛdaḥ kim
athāsthiraḥ kiṃ yugadīrgharoṣaḥ || 2.24 ||*

On more than one occasion I have reflected:
I don't know if wicked men are constant or inconstant.
If truly constant, then why would their affection
Last just a moment? And if inconstant,
Why does their hatred last a long aeon?

*vidher upādhyāyadhurām asādhur
apūrvacāritradharo 'dhiśetām |
tenāpy asṛṣṭāni sṛjaty ayaṃ
yat satām lalāṭeṣu durakṣarāṇi || 2.25 ||*

A bad person, having unprecedented conduct
Takes on the burden of being the teacher of fate.
Since he creates evil letters on the heads of the good
By that too he creates something previously unknown.

*pareṇa sāmānyakaver vacas tād
vidhīyatām aṅgulibhaṅgapātram |
sarvānavadyas tu katham prabandhaḥ
saṃjāyate durjanahantakāraḥ || 2.26 ||*

A bad person must of course make the words of any poet
the target for a scolding wag of the finger.
But how does a composition, blameless in every regard,
become a meal ticket for an evil-minded wretch?

*sarasvatīmātur abbhūc ciraṃ na yaḥ
kavitvapāṇḍityagghanastanaṃdhayaḥ |
katham sa sarvāṅgam anāptasauṣṭhavo
dinād dinam prauḍhivīśeṣam aśnute || 2.27 ||*

If he was not suckled as an infant
on those two, Poetry and Learning,
the ample breasts of Mother Sarasvatī,
Without having become hale and strong,
How could he attain a body
mature and self-confident?

*baddbodyamāpi satṛṇābhyavahārivṛttau
dhanyasya kasyacana hanta vaśaṁvadā gauḥ |
sūte tam adbhutarasaṁ bahudhā sudhāyā
yo 'nyaḥ prakāra iva viśvam idaṁ punīte || 2.28 ||*

Look. Although she is ready
To eat any plant or grass,
A cow, tamed to the will of a virtuous man,
produces over and over
that wonderful liquid of milk,
which, like another type of ambrosial nectar,
purifies the world entire.

So too Poetic Speech,
although prepared to articulate all
down to the most insignificant things,
under the power of some virtuous man,
produces over and over
the wonderful aesthetic savour.
which, like another type of ambrosial nectar,
purifies the world entire.

*ye no padasthitiḥṣaḥ kavayaḥ kathaṁcin
nārthaprathāpranayinaḥ pratibhādaridrāḥ |
kāvyagraheṇa kim arocakino 'pi te 'nyad
alpīyaso mitarasāc ca batāpnuvanti || 2.29 ||*

Since they neither delight in the placement of words,
Nor have interest in the spreading forth of meanings,
And are impoverished of poetic inspiration,
What do those poets get, after all, through understanding poetry
Even though they are disinterested
Other than a very small amount of meted-out
Aesthetic savour?

*artho 'sti cen na padaśuddhir athāsti sāpi
no rītir asti yadi sā ghaṭanā kutastyā |
sāpy asti cen na navavakragatis tad etad
vyartham vinā rasam aho gahanam kavitvam || 2.30 ||*

If it was just meaning, then there would be no perfection of words,
—if this is what it is about, there would be no style,
If that were the point, then where would a complete composition come
from?
And if there were, then there would be no new indirect mode of expression.
Without poetic savour all of this is meaningless.
Ah, poetry is profound!

*kāvyam ya eva gahanam kṣamate prayoktum
śaktaḥ sa eva rasam apy asamam praṇetum |
bhānur ya eva dahatīha kharair mayūkhaiḥ
sadyaḥ sa eva jagad āvr̥ṇute payobhiḥ || 2.31 ||*

The same one who is able to accomplish profound poetry
Is able to bring forth uncommon poetic savour as well.
That very sun which burns this world with his harsh rays
At the same time covers the earth with rainwater.

*tais tair alamkṛtiśatair avataṁsito 'pi
rūḍho mahaty api pade dhṛtasauṣṭhavo 'pi |
nūnam vinā ghanarasaprasarābbhisekam
kāvyādhirājapadam arhati na prabandhaḥ || 2.32 ||*

Even though it is adorned by hundreds of various figures of speech,
Even though it has ascended to the heights of bombast,
Even though it holds an excellent cleverness,
Assuredly indeed without the consecration of a flood of dense poetic savour
A work does not merit the position of overlord of poems.

Just as man does not merit overlordship,
Even though he is adorned with hundreds of ornaments,
Even though he is raised to a high position,
Even though he has a firmness of bearing,
Without a royal consecration.

*vāṇī prayatnaghaṭanānīpunasya rīti-
naiyatyaṃ alpakavitur bhajatām varākī |
kallolitā punar ananīkuśam uktidevī
kvedyṃśi saṃsmarati tucchaviceṣṭitāni || 2.33 ||*

The trifling speech of a small poet,
Laboriously clever in its construction
Obliges itself to style.
Yet when might the Goddess Speech—
A wave surging up unrestrained—
Think on such vain, ill-considered works?

*ślāghyaiva vakrimagatir ghanadārḍhyabandho
tasyāḥ kavipravarasūktidhanurlatāyāḥ |
kaṃāntikapraṇayabhāji guṇe yadīye
cetāṃsi matsaravatām jhaṭiti truṭanti || 2.34 ||*

Praiseworthy indeed is the crooked movement,
Of that bow—the speech of the best of poets,
Favourable to a firm strength.
When its taut string is drawn to the ear
The hearts of the enemy suddenly burst,
Just as the hearts of the wicked burst when
Its poetic qualities reach to the ear.

*tattatsamagrabahūśāstravimarśasiddha-
vaidaghyadigdhamatayo bahavaḥ kavantām |
yat kiṃcid asti tu mahākavivāgrahasyaṃ
svapne 'pi tasya kila te na diśaṃ spṛśanti || 2.35 ||*

Many poeticise, their minds besotted by
A cleverness achieved from deliberating about
This or that erudite treatise detailing
That wonderful secret of a great poet's speech.
It's obvious that they cannot touch
Even a part of what that is, even in a dream.

*kuryus tv anukṣaṇam asīkṣitalakṣaṇā ye
kāpeyam āḥ kavipadādbhigamasprhāyāḥ |
te 'nudgatacchadapuṭa iva pakṣiśāvā
vyagrā baṭhoḍḍayanabhūmny asakṛt patanti || 2.36 ||*

Those, unlearned in the aim of true poetry,
Might ever more make damnable monkey tricks
Out of a greedy desire for reaching a poet's position.
They are like baby birds falling again and again,
Their wings yet undeveloped yet eagerly engrossed in
Forcing their way up to the sky.

*no śakya eva parihṛtya dṛḍhāṃ parīkṣāṃ
jñātum mitasya mahataś ca kaver viśeṣaḥ |
ko nāma tīvrapavanāgamam antareṇa
bhedena vetti śikhidīpamaṇipradīpau || 2.37 ||*

The special quality of a poet—whether middling or great—
Is not at all able to be known without intense examination.
Who indeed is able to know the difference between an oil lantern
And a jewel lamp without the coming of a strong wind?

*vyutpattim ūṣaṇam avaihi nitāntataikṣṇyān
mādhuryato rasam atthonmiśadikṣudīkṣam |
rūḍhā tayor yadi mitho ghaṭanā kavīnām
jātaiva tadvacasi pānakarītisiddhiḥ || 2.38 ||*

Understand that education is black pepper,
because it is really bitterly sharp.
Similarly understand aesthetic savour
As the blessing of cane juice sweet,
because it is sweet.
For poets, if a concoction of the two
Mutually augments the other, then
Style is achieved in their speech—
A drink containing the right amount of sugar and spice.

*abhraṃkaṣaṇmiṣitakīrtisitātapatraḥ
stutyah sa eva kavimaṇḍalacakravartī |
yasyecchayaiva purataḥ svayam ūjjihīte
drāg vācyavācakamayah pṛtanāniveśaḥ || 2.39 ||*

The emperor of the world's poets
Is to be praised—a white parasol is his fame,
Fully opened and scraping the clouds.
Arrayed before him springs up the army camp,

Of its own accord, through his will alone.
Consisting of words which signify
And meanings which are to be signified.

*niṣpīditā bahumukhaṃ suvate babūnām
gāvaś cirān mitasubhāṣitadugdhadhārāḥ |
kaścit tv agādharasaśuddhanavaprabandha-
kṣīrodadānapatir eti kaviśvaratvam || 2.40 ||*

For a long time, the cows of speech have continued to produce
For various people from their udders streams of milk
—measured amounts of well-spoken verse.
However, some master of the Ocean of Milk as a new composition
Purified through its deep aesthetic sentiment
Becomes the emperor of poetry.

*yā vaidarbhapathādhvanīnabhaṇitipratyagrasūtrāntara-
protapṛītikṛdartharatnaghaṭitaḥ kaṇṭhe guṇo dbīmatām |
vāgdevīnayanāñcalāñcanacamatkāraṃ vinodeti kiṃ
sā vāṇī maśṇīkṛtā niravadhi vyutpattiśāñśmani || 2.41 ||*

Speech is a quality of the wise, composed of jewels of meaning
That give pleasure as they are strung together on a new thread—
Language traveling down the path of the Vaidarbha style.
Once polished completely smooth on the whetstone of education,
Poetry arises with the astonishment of the eye-corners of the Goddess Sarasvatī.

*yātās te rasasārasaṃgrahavidhiṃ niṣpīḍya niṣpīḍya ye
vāktattvekṣulatām purā katipaye tattvasprśaś cakrīre |
jāyante 'dya yathāyatham tu kavayas te tatra saṃtanvate
ye 'nuprāsakaṭhoracitrāyamakaśleṣādiśalkoccayam || 2.42 ||*

Gone are those few poets of old, who
Made the collected rules of the essence of *rasa*
After pressing and pressing the sugarcane of speech's truth,
And reached its true essence.
But these days poets come up one after another,
And to it add their heaps of worn-out scraps—
Alliteration, difficult picture-poetry, rhyme, and pun.

*sarvaḥ saṁcarato pathā parakavigrāmasya kaścīt tu sa
ślaghyaḥ svapratibhādhānasya mahataḥ prakrāntadīvyavyayaḥ |
yadvīśrāṇitanavyavāṇmayabr̥hatsetupratīṣṭhājūṣo
visrambhād bahavas tiranti gaḥane sārasvatasrotasi || 2.43 ||*

Everyone troops down the path crowded
With other poets. But one who strives to pay out
All the divinely earned wealth of his own—
His poetic inspiration—is praiseworthy.
Many may descend into the deep stream
Of the Goddess Speech with true confidence,
Delighted by the establishment of the great bridge
Of the new literature bestowed by him.

*nirmaryādakhalopatāpanabr̥hadduṣkarmanirmārjana-
prāyaścittasacetanaśrutisudbhāsekakriyādīkṣitāḥ |
keśāmcit kṛtinām girāḥ parīṇatavyutpattisīmāntita-
prādurbhūtanavīnavakrimaguṇāḥ kaṇṭhe satām śerate || 2.44 ||*

The words of some wonderfully skilled creators
Are consecrated for the ritual sprinkling
Of the ears of the wise with immortal nectar,
Which serves as an expiation to wipe clean
Extreme pain caused by wicked men—the greatest of evils.
These words bring forth a quality—a new indirect beauty
Separated out through a fully matured intellect.
They lie in the throats of the good.

*adhiṣṭhāyāśrāntaśrutavitatasimhāsanadburām
aho vīraḥ kaścic chrayati kavisāmrājyapadavīm |
vilāsaṁ gr̥hṇāno bhaṇitamayam akṣuṇṇam aparair
giro devyā viśrāṇitam abhinavaṁ prābhṛtam iva || 2.45 ||*

With great effort a hero ascends the Lion Throne—
Far-spreading in its unwavering fame!
He reclines at the locus of sovereignty over poets,
Accepting the graceful beauty made of language—
One not experienced by anyone else—
As if it were a new offering
Bestowed by the Goddess Speech.

*vyutpattipratipatticañcur avacaḥsaṃcāravācamyamo
vakreṇaiva kalālavena kurute yaḥ kāvyam avyākulaḥ |
muktavā varma vibhāya karma ca samitkālocitaṃ so 'khiḷaṃ
viśvaṃ dārumayena jetum asinā saṃrambhato jimbhate || 2.46 ||*

A poet who composes poetry, being
Accomplished through a good education,
And silent regarding things not to be spoken,
But not roused by even a small portion
Of the art known as indirect speech
Is a warrior who takes off his armour
And leaves aside all his battle gear
And, in his arrogance, starts out boldly
To conquer the whole world with a sword
made of wood.

*vācam vakrīmapaddhatiḥ suvibitavyutpattipārāyaṇa-
prāvīṇyapraguṇasya hanta kavituḥ sollāsaṃ unmīlati |
kṣīṇāpīndukalā carācaraguror devasya caṇḍīpateś
cūḍāsaṅgam avāpya kutra na gatā hr̥dyānavadyāṃ sthitim || 2.47 ||*

The indirect path of the speech of a poet,
Through his proficiency during his education
blossoms joyfully.
Does not the crescent of the moon,
Although slender in its curvature,
Reach the crown of Śiva, Caṇḍī's lord,
The master of all beings, moving and unmoving,
And attain a beloved and cherished position?

*avibitabhāttattacchāstrakramopaniṣacchrame
kavitari giri prāgalbhyāṃ no kathamcid udañcati |
ṛtukṛtaparīpākasrotaḥprakaraṣaṃ anāśrite
katham iva rasaprasyaṇḍaḥ syād dadhitthaśalāṭuni || 2.48 ||*

For a poet who does not exert himself
In the secret knowledge contained in
The various important treatises,
Self-possession does not arise in his words at all.
How could any sweet juice flow forth
From an unripe *kapittha* fruit, still not

Visited by the abundance of water
During the Season of the Rains?

*āṭopena paṭīyasā yad api sāvāṇī kaver āmukhe
kheḷanti prathate tathāpi kurute no sanmanorañjanam |
na syād yāvad amandasundaragūṇālaṃkāraḥkārāḥkārīṭaḥ
sa prasyandilasadrasāyanarasāsārānusārī rasaḥ || 2.49 ||*

Although the speech of a poet at the beginning
As it gets going, swells with the most clever self-regard
Nevertheless it does not provide relish to the good,
As long as the juice of aesthetic savour, made to resound
With strikingly beautiful figures of speech
And poetic qualities, be not conformable
To the essence of the immortal elixir flowing forth.

*madbukaṇamuco vāco yeṣāṃ visāri rasaṃ kam apy
urutaraparīpākodrekāḥ pikā iva bibhrati |
ta iha kavayo manye nānye punar duratikrama-
kramakāṭhinatāyogād yeṣāṃ vimuhyati śemuṣī || 2.50 ||*

Those whose words carry some marvelous essence
Spreading out as they drip drops of sweet honey
Like cuckoos fully grown and mature—
Those are the only ones in this world
I consider poets, no others
Since they resort to tortuous syntax
No one can unravel and
Bewilder the intellect.

*paraślokān stokān pratidivasam abhyasya nanu ye
catuṣpādīm kuryur bahava iva te santi kavayaḥ |
avicchinnodgacchajjaladbilaharīṭisubhṛdaḥ
subhṛdyā vaiśadyaṃ dadhati kila keṣāṃcana girāḥ || 2.51 ||*

Certainly poets in this world are many,
Who can repeat day after day a few verses of others
And can make four metrical quarters,
Yet the captivating words of those rare geniuses,
Like lines of waves in the ocean constantly upwelling
Hold a fresh clarity.

*divye vākprasarakrame sukavituh pratyakṣavācaspatēḥ
śrotrastotrakathāsu kaḥ khalu paṭuh syāc carmacakṣurjanah |
labhyaḥ śeṣaphaṇī kuto 'tra sa tu yaś cakṣuḥsahasradvayen-
ākarnyainam atha stutau vitanuyāj jibhāsahasradvayīm || 2.52 ||*

Regarding the divine coming forth of poetic language
Of a true poet, a veritable Lord of Speech himself,
What clever person could be blind to the stories
Of those who have heard and who have praised?
How would the Serpent King Śeṣa be known,
Who having heard this poet with his two thousand eyes
Would then stretch out his thousand forked tongues in praise?

*meṇṭhe swardviradādhirohini vaśaṃ yāte subandhau vidheḥ
śānte hanta ca bhāravau vighaṭite bāṇe viśādasprśah |
vāgdevyā viramantu mantuvidhurā drāḡ dṛṣṭayaś ceṣṭate
śiṣṭaḥ kaścana sa prasādayati tāṃ yadvāṇisadvāṇinī || 2.53 ||*

Alas! Now that the poet Meṇṭha has mounted
The celestial elephant, Subandhu
Has succumbed the power of Fate,
Bhāravi rests peacefully, and Bāṇa
Like an arrow, is broken to pieces.
May the sorrowing eyes of the Goddess of Speech
Touched by grief quickly become happy,
There is still someone left living; he will gladden her
As a true messenger of poetry!

*trayaś triṃśat koṭyo dadhatu vibudhā dveṣakaluṣāṃ
dhiyaṃ nityaṃ kāvyē tridaśacarite ke vayaṃ amī |
bhuvah khaṇḍe 'py asmiṇ bata sa vidhinaiko 'pi vibudho
na sṛṣṭo yaḥ kāvyam dhṛtavimalabuddhiḥ kalayate || 2.54 ||*

May the thirty-three crore gods keep their minds,
Muddled by hatred, on Kāvya, the demons' guru.
Who among us has the behaviour of the gods?
Even in this world, the Creator has made
not even one godly wise man who, with
his intellect pure, may accomplish *kāvya*—
True Poetry.

*śabdārthānām pariśad akhilā nityam ājñāvidheyā
dāsyam yasya śrayati purato bhrūlatāspandanena |
sa ślaghyaśrī jagati kathitaś cakravartī kavinām
śvetacchatracchavir upacitā kiṃ ca tasyaiva kīrtiḥ || 2.55 ||*

The entire assembly of words and meanings
Are subservient to his commands—They fall
Into line as slaves before him
At the quivering of his brow.
Given his laudable splendor, in the world
He is called the emperor of poets;
Does not his fame spread out, having the splendour
Of a white parasol?

*śaithilyasprśī saṃśayāvahapade kṣodāsaḥṣṇau kavēḥ
svairam tatra sarasvatī nivīśate kiṃ kāvyajīrṇaukasi |
yac chāstrakramaśilpakārubbhir alaṃbhūṣṇuprakaṣaiḥ parair
nyastābbhiḥ katham apy upaskṛtivacaḥsthūṇābbhir uttabhyate || 2.56 ||*

Would Sarasvatī willingly enter into the decayed house of poetry
That is well-nigh falling apart, a rickety building,
unable to bear any strain—
 like a poem with a loose construction,
 whose words carry doubtful meaning,
 unable to bear any examination?
That house of poetry could be shored up
By other skilled and competent craftsmen,
Who know the essence of the treatises,
With supports of language for adornment
Set up with some difficulty.

*vācaḥ kāvyarahasyavartmani parāḥ puṣṇāntu paṅgūyitam
tasyāḥ kiṃ tu girāḥ kva nāma ghaṭate rodhaḥ padasphūrṭiṣu |
yā sārasvatapādālepanibhrtāvaskanditānaṅkuśa-
svācchandyākḥilavāṇmayādhvasu yathābbhiprāyam āceṣṭate || 2.57 ||*

Other words foster a limping gait
on the way to poetry's secret.
But where would a blockage come about
For that Speech, which moves about as it likes,
On all paths of language's art,

independent, unguided, anointed unseen
by the foot-unguent from the Goddess of Speech?

*tān saṃgacchati bhārātī bhagavatī visrambhataḥ krīḍayā-
nudhyātaiva jhatity asāv api baṭhānabhyāsadūrikṛtā |
tattadyatnaśataprasāditavacodevīprasādīkṛtaṃ
svacchaṃ saṃgamanīyaraṭnam iva ye śaktyadbhutaṃ bibhrati || 2.58 ||*

The Goddess of Speech has been banished
By lack of attentive practice for a long time.
Yet, as soon as she is thought about,
She herself suddenly comes in graceful play
To those, keeping their trust in her, who bear
The wonder that is poetic power,
Like a clear crystal leading to union
Which has been blessed by the Goddess of Speech
Herself rendered favourable by efforts,
Diverse in their hundreds.

*iti śrījonarājakṛtayā tīkayā sametaḥ śrīrājānakaviśvāvartasūnor
mahākavirājārājānakasrīmaṇkhakasya kṛtau śrīkaṇṭhacarite mahākāvye
sujanadurjanavarṇano nāma dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ*

Thus the Second Chapter,
Named The Description of Good and Bad People
In the Great Poem, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*,
A Work of the Illustrious Rājānaka Maṇkhaka, the Great Poet,
the Son of the Illustrious Rājānaka Viśvāvarta,
Along with a Commentary Made by the Illustrious Jonarāja.

Notes on the verses

2.1: The main idea is that good poets are able to separate poetic qualities (*guṇa*) from poetic faults (*doṣa*) just as geese are able to separate milk from water. This is a common image in Sanskrit poetry.

2.2: This verse alludes to the myth of Rāhu, part of the story of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. This verse is an example of *samāsokti*, in which certain sequences of phonemes need to be read twice for different meanings. Rather than trying to work this into a single translation, I have chosen here to ‘unravel’ the double meanings and translate two broadly parallel sentences linked by their implicit comparison. The story of Rāhu is widely known. *Sat* meaning ‘educated men’ and *taikṣṇya* in the poetry meaning, ‘fierce intellect.’

2.3: ‘Did he then become one of the gods?’ translates Mañkha’s *gataḥ kiṃ vibudhatvayogam*, lit. ‘Did he go to union with the state of the gods?’ Jonarāja’s commentary does not gloss *yoga*, however it seems to me that there are perhaps other valences as well. Perhaps given the planetary allusions here, *yoga* could be understood as ‘astral conjunction.’ The meaning would then be ‘did he go to a conjunction with Vibudha (=Jupiter, =Bṛhaspati, teacher of the gods)?’ Jonarāja also notes that *vibudhatva* should be understood both as ‘the being a god’ and ‘the being a wise man,’ *vibudhatvasya devatvasya paṇḍitatvasya ca yogam*.

2.4: Here Mañkha speaks to the difference between innate poetic capacity (*pratibhā* or *kāvyaśakti*) and education or practice (*vyutpatti*). This distinction is found in the earliest layers of poetic theory where it is stated that a truly great poet needs both. *Kasyāpi* is here used in the sense of ‘something special,’ or as Jonarāja glosses it *lokottaraguṇa*. Here Jonarāja states that ‘potential (*śakti*) is a particular *saṃskāra* which has the form of the seed of poetry (*kavitva*)’ (*śaktiḥ kavītvabījarūpaḥ saṃskāra-viśeṣaḥ*). His commentary highlights that this poetic skill is innate. Mañkha argues in this verse that no amount of study will make even a wise person skilled in poetry if he does not possess this innate power. He will just get tired.

2.5: This verse takes the other side of the *pratibhā-vyutpatti* distinction begun in verse 4.

2.6: Now Maṅkha moves to the constituent parts of poetry, sound (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*). The verse is again a *samāsokti*, and I translated the double meanings in their own clauses. While the verse only speaks to the metal itself, I add the idea of coins because I think this is what the image requires. For *rīti* meaning brass, see *Agnīpurāṇa* 336.39):

dravyaṃ vitaṃ svāpateyaṃ riktham ṛktham dhanam vasu |

rītiḥ striyām ārakūṭo na striyām atha tāmraṅgam ||

and the *Amarakośa* 2.8.1367:

rītiḥ striyām ārakūṭo na striyām atha tāmraṅgam ||

2.7: I translate *upaniṣad* as 'academic knowledge,' since it seems to me that Maṅkha's use of the term *upaniṣad* draws on the traditional etymology of sitting down near a teacher. *Kāvyaṃ kaveḥ puṣyati nistuṣatvam*, lit. 'the poetry of a poet gains the state of not having chaff.' While Monier-Williams defines *nistuṣatvam* as *nirduṣatvam* citing this verse from the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* and following the commentary of Jonarāja, it seems to me that there is an agricultural or grain-growing image here. Here, I think the idea is that a poem only becomes fit for consumption after much deliberation and discussion just as grain is only edible when it loses its chaff (*tuṣa*) through the process of refinement.

2.8: This verse relies on ideas of purity and impurity surrounding food and that most people must purify their mouths with verses that are gleaned from other sources, while a true poet makes verses that are pure (and purifying by nature). Jonarāja explains the verse like so: 'Because the bits of leftovers spat from the mouth are inferior, in so far as they require verses (*śloka*) made by oneself or others, to those words (*vāṇī*) that are accompanied by effort, many purify [that is to say] consecrate the mouth with collections (*saṃgraha*) of verses (*śloka*) abandoned without respect.' *prayatnapūrvam yasyā vāṇyā ucchiṣṭalavānām svakṛtānyakṛtaślokāpekṣayā nyūnatvād anā-dareṇa tyaktānām ślokanām saṃgrahena bahavo mukhaṃ punanti saṃskurvante. kaviṇā svaprabandhamadhyāt tadasamatayā tyaktāni padyāny adhītya sabhāsu mānārḥā bhavanti arthaḥ*. Throughout the text Maṅkha uses the interrogative pronoun plus *api* (here *kasyāpi*) to mean a special person, that is to say an excellent poet. As Jonarāja glosses *kasyāpi*, 'not, on the other hand, of everyone' *na tu sarveṣām*. Throughout this chapter the unique quality of good poetry and good poets is emphasised.

2.9: 'would-be poets,' lit. 'the others of poets' *pare kavīnām*, who Jonarāja recognises as *khalas*. Jonarāja glosses 'lapses,' *skhalitam*, as poetic faults,

kāvyaadoṣa. The idea here is that defects are more readily apparent on clean things than dirty things. Poetic faults are all the more glaring in good compositions.

2.10: Jonarāja states: ‘The water buffalo plunge into the Gaṅgā only in order to find muck, and they are not able to find it there, because the Gaṅgā leads to heaven.’ *mahīṣās ca pañkāṛtham eva gaṅgāyām majjanti, na ca tat tatra labhante. gaṅgāyā nabhogāmitvāt.*

2.11: Here Mañkha introduces one of his most important concepts, that of indirect language *vakrima*, which literally means crookedness (also *vakratā* and *vakrokti*). As Jonarāja states: The meaning is that crooked speech (*vakrokti*) alone produces aesthetic savour (*camatkaroti*) to a high degree through both the absence of faults and the possession of *rasa*.

doṣābhāvarasavattvābhyām vakroktir evādhikam camatkarotīty arthaḥ. He goes on to say that ‘Crookedness is the state of having gone beyond the well-known method [of composing poetry].’

prasiddhaprasthānavyatiriktatvam vakrimā. I have taken *ṭaṅka* to mean ‘distinct mark.’ I have translated some of the words in the verse twice to make clear the parallel that Mañkha draws.

2.12: Jonarāja: ‘The meaning is that one who knows literature (*sāhityajña*) is precisely the one who knows the nobility (*audārya*) of literature.’ *sāhityajña eva kāvyaudāryam jānātīty arthaḥ*.

2.14: While Mañkha lauds *vakratva* as an integral part of poetic description, it must be in the service of the poem itself; as an end in itself it serves to obfuscate rather than manifest the poem’s beauty. This verse also appears in the *Subhāṣitāvali*, 174.

2.15: I take *prakṛta* as if it were *prakṛta* following Jonarāja’s commentary.

2.16: Jonarāja: ‘The purport (*tātparya*) is: may bad people not cause fear to the good by their superimposition (*āropa*) of their own faults [upon others]. Since by the creator their mode of living (*vyṛtti*) [that is to say] their livelihood (*vetana*) is the rearing [that is to say] malicious gossip, [which is] nothing other than the superimposition of faults. They exert themselves toward others’ faults as if it were their occupation. That is the meaning. From birth, their occupation is toward the imputing of faults on others, completely irrespective of [their own personal] profit. This is the purport.’

satām doṣāropeṇa durjanā mā bhayaṃ kurvantv iti tātpariyam. yato vidhātrā paisūnaṃ doṣāropa eva pāśupālyam vṛttir vetanaṃ kṛtā. vṛttāu iva paroḣe prayatanta ity arthaḥ. ā janmanaḥ pareṣām doṣāropeṇa lābhanirapekṣam eva vṛttā iti tātpariyam.

2.17: Jonarāja explains: 'Bad people (*khala*) are always nothing but fools. This is the meaning. If a bad person does have wisdom, then they would superimpose faults on the good and steal away their lives' breaths. This is the meaning. And if a monkey had wings, then they would cause mischief everywhere.' *khalāḥ sarvadaiva mūrkhā evety arthaḥ. khalāḥ savidyā yady syus tadā sādhuṣu doṣān āropya prāṇān apahareyur ity arthaḥ. vānarasya ca pakṣā yady syus tadā viśvasyopadravaṃ kuryāt.*

2.18: Jonarāja: 'A bad person is intent on the superimposing of faults onto good people. A crowd of snakes, overcome by the renown of the cruelty of bad people enter with shame into the Pātāla Underworld. For Snakes, when oppressed, bite. But on the other hand, bad people [lash out] even when unprovoked. Entry into the Pātāla Underworld is the true state of a Snake. Here shame is the cause that is imagined (*sambhāvita*).' *durjanaḥ sādhubhūnām doṣāropeṣu sāvadhānaḥ. yasya khalasya krūratvaprasiddhyā parābhūtaḥ phanīgano lajjayeva pātālaṃ praviṣṭaḥ. lajjito hi lokasamnidhau sthātum na śaknoti. sarpo hi bādhitō dāmṣaṃ dadāti. durjanas tv abodhito'rthaḥ. sarpasya pātālapraveśo vāstavaḥ. tatra lajjā nimittaṃ sambhāvitam.*

2.19: Jonarāja takes the imperatives in the sense of approbation (*anumatau loṭ*), so I translate them with the English construction 'let ... let ... since ...' Jonarāja explains the poetic conceit: 'Without the contempt of bad people through their agitation, clarity (*prasāda*) of the poetic eye [that is to say] the dexterity in poetry does not arise. A good person, on whom faults have been imputed by a bad person, makes careful poetry. The goal is only to illuminate the low state that they have come to themselves through the censure of the good on the part of the lowly, because the lowly people have shown themselves as having acquired good qualities by means of poetic flaws. For that reason, censure of the good is commenced by them, thus they manifest their own goodness by the friendly advice to even enemies. And mascara causes tears and must be a cause of blackness. And therefore without powder [of the mascara] clarity of vision does not come about.' *tadīyakṣodena khalāvamānena vinā sārasvatadr̥śaḥ kāvyādicāturyāḥ prasādo na jāyate. durjanenāropitadoṣaḥ sādhuḥ apramattaṃ kāvyam karoti. doṣadvareṇa guṇalābhasaṃdarśanān nīcānām sādhubinidāyā kevalam svagatanīca-*

tvaparakāśanam eva phalam. atas taiḥ satām nindaivārambhaṇīyeti vairiṇām api hitopadeśena svasya saujanyaṃ vyanakti. añjanaṃ ca bāṣpa-janakam kārṣṇyakāri cāstu. tac cūrṇena vinā dṛṣṭiprasādo na bhavati.

2.21: Jonarāja: ‘There is the identification of shivering caused by cold with shivering caused by fear.’ *bhayakṛtasya kampasya śitakṛtena kampenā-dhyavasānam.*

2.22: Jonarāja: ‘Bad people themselves are the sons of Śaramā (*śārameya*), [that is to say] dogs, by whom a single quality is borne, since they bark in the presence of the thieves of poetry while they desire to steal [that is to say] to rob those dictionaries or those treasures of the pearls/well-turned verse of others. They illuminate thieves in the assembly.’ *durjanā eva śārameyāḥ śvanas tair eko guṇas tu dhṛtaḥ. yat pareṣāṃ sūktayas tāsām koṣas tā eva vā koṣas taṃ luṇṭhayitum moṣitum icchatām kāvyacaurāṇām agratas te bhaṣanti. cauryam sabhāsu prakāśayanti.*

2.23: Jonarāja: ‘In the assembly halls he produces fire with his mouth even without [magical] herbs and spells which exist as causes for the production of fire. Because evil words cause burning there is an identification with fire. Magicians (*aindrajaḷika*) act out the production of fire through the power of herbal potions, etc. Bad people on the other hand even without these herbal potions vomit forth fire with their mouths. The words of bad people burn like fire, this is the meaning.’ *yo vahnijananakāraṇabhūtam oṣadhīr mantratantram ca vinaiva sabhāsu mukhenāgniṃ sūte. dāhakatvād durva-canānām agnīnādhyaavasānam. auśadhādibalād aindrajaḷikā agnijananam abhinayanti. khalas tv auśadhādi vina mukhenāgniṃ vamatī. agnivad durjanavacanam dahatīty arthaḥ.*

2.26: This verse seems to rely on two gestures: that of the scolding finger of reproach (as Jonarāja glosses it, the *tarjanā*) and the asking for a handout for alms. I translate *saṃjāyate durjanahantakāraḥ* as ‘become a meal ticket,’ since Maṅkha here argues that bad people use the occasion to attack poetry as a way to earn their meal. Here he uses the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 29:35cd–36ab. Translated by F. Eden Pargiter:

*grāsapramāṇam bhikṣā syād agraṃ grāsacatuṣṭayam |
agrāc caturguṇam tat tu hantakāraṃ vidur budhāḥ ||*

The alms should be the size of a mouthful, the *agra* [the size of] four mouthfuls. Brahmins call the *agra* four times a *hantākara*.

2.27: Jonarāja begins his commentary on this verse with the statement ‘Sarasvatī alone is the mother of poets’ *sarasvaty eva kavīnām mātā*. Jonarāja glosses *sausthava* as *vyutpattigarbhatva*. The Sanskrit word *prauḍhi* when used in reference to bodies means ‘maturity’ or ‘full-development’; when used in reference to poetry it means ‘boldness’ or ‘self-assuredness.’ For this reason I overtranslated the term ‘mature and self-confident.’ Jonarāja’s commentary: ‘He who drinks from the two breasts which are poetry and learning alone is a fit vessel for *prauḍhi*. And he who does not drink from the breasts of his mother for a long time, how could he obtain boldness/maturity (*prāgalbhyam*)?’ *ya eva kavītvapāṇḍitye eva stānāv apibat sa eva prauḍhipātram ity arthaḥ. yaś ca mātuh stānau ciraṃ na pibati sa katham prāgalbhyam prāpnoti*.

2.28: This verse relies on a *śleṣa* revolving around the two meanings of the word *gauḥ*: ‘cow’ and ‘speech.’ The conceit of the verse is that speech and cows under the control of a virtuous man (*dhanya*) automatically produce their divine products, milk and aesthetic savour. *Satṛṇa* is an indeclinable in compound meaning ‘up to and including grass.’ *Tṛṇa* is also used idiomatically to mean something insignificant. Jonarāja writes: ‘Poetry flashes forth through the grace of Sarasvatī without effort at all. This is the meaning.’ *sārasvataprasādād ayatnenaiva kāvyam sphurātīty arthaḥ*.

2.29: Jonarāja provides an interesting gloss on *arocakino’pi*. He writes: ‘Although taking no delight, [that is to say] although continuing to exert themselves in poetry with no discernment ...’ *te ’rocakino ’py avivekapūrvam kāvye prayatamānā api ...*. Jonarāja ‘Without the favour of Sarasvatī, poetry does not flash forth even with hard effort, or [if] it did flash forth, it is not worthy of honor. Furthermore, those who are without words and without meaning, although they do not take delight, they obtain a bit and a small bit of poetic savour. In such a way, by this pair of verses, through *anvaya* and *vyatireka*, only the favour of Sarasvatī is the root of the flashing forth of poetry. It is communicated by logical argumentation (*yukti*).’ *sarasvatīprasādam vinā prayatnenāpi kāvyam na sphurati, sphuritam vā mārhaṃ na bhavātīty arthaḥ. ye ca padahinā nirarthāś ca te ’rocakino ’py alpam alparasam cāpnuvanti. evam ślokadvayenānvayavyatirekābhyām sarasvatīprasāda eva kāvyasphuraṇamūlam iti yuktyā pratipāditam*.

2.30: This verse is found in the *Subhāṣitāvali*, listed as verse 175. Here Mañkha again returns to his favoured way of explaining poetry, *vakra*. The thrust of this verse is that difficulty of locating poetic excellence: Is it in the

meaning? The word? The style? The work as a whole? The point is that one particular trait cannot be isolated as the core of poetry. Given the difficulty of this verse, I have translated the entirety of Jonarāja's commentary here. 'Oh! Poetry is deep, [that is to say] unfathomable [that is to say] difficult. Since the meaning is directly denoted (*vācya*), etc., [that is to say] if it is clearly delineated (*ullikhita*), then there would be no beauty [that is to say] state of being well-formed of words. If there is [beauty on the part of words], then the composition of words (*padaracanā*) would not possess qualities. If it did, where would the composition come from? And if it were to come about, there would be no new crooked mode of going (*vakragati*) [that is to say] it would not be any different from the well-known way of setting forth. This and that, [that is to say] meaning (*artha*) and all the rest, even if they are customary (*samudita*) [in poetry] would be fruitless without poetic savour (*rasa*). Poetic savour alone is predominant in poetry. On the other hand, other qualities are secondary (*guṇībhūta*). This is the meaning.' *aho kāvyam gahanam durgāham duṣkaram. yato vācyādir artho yady ullikhitas tarhi padānām śuddhiḥ samkṛtatvam nāsti. sāpi yady asti tarhi guṇavatī padaracanā nāsti. sā ced asti ghaṭanā kutastyaḥ kutaḥ. sāpi ced asti na nava-vakragatir apūrvam prasiddhaprasthānavyatiṛekitvam nāsti. tad etad arthādi samuditam api rasam vinā niṣphalam. rasa eva kāvye pradhānam. anye guṇās tu guṇībhūtā ity arthaḥ.*

2.31: This verse shows the understanding that heat and rain are linked together. Jonarāja writes: 'Since that very sun that burns the world with its harsh rays is the very same that sprinkles the world with water. Rain comes about through heat alone.' *yato ya evārkaḥ tikṣṇaiḥ karair jagad dahati sa eva sadyo jalair jagat siñcati. tāpenaiva vṛṣṭir bhavatīty arthaḥ.*

2.32: In this verse Mañkha argues that a poem does not become truly great without the presence of *rasa*. Jonarāja makes an even finer point in his commentary: 'A poem is a great poem only if it has poetic savour.' *sarasam eva kāvyam mahākāvyam ity arthaḥ.* Through double meanings, this verse compares a composition (*prabandha*) to a king and argues that it is not the accoutrements that makes a poem great or a man a king, but rather it is the being doused in the consecratory *rasa* in the case of the poem and the consecratory shower (*abhiṣeka*) in the case of the king. I fill out this *samāsokti* in the translation to a far greater degree than Jonarāja. However, he does recognise two *pakṣas*; the commentary states: 'Although he is adorned with ornaments like strings of pearls and although he has ascended to the lion throne, a person does not merit the position of king without a consecration.'

hārādyalamkārabhūṣito 'pi simbhāsanārūḍho 'pi puruṣo 'bhiṣekaṃ vinā na rājapadārhaḥ. While he recognises two senses in some places, such as that *alamkāra* means figures of speech in the poetic work *pakṣa* and ornaments in the king *pakṣa*, he does not apply this consistently to all of the attributes in the poem. I have attempted to do this, however, my understanding and translation remain provisional. I translate the phrase *rūḍho mahaty api* as 'Even though it has ascended to the heights of bombast,' in the poetic composition *pakṣa* and 'even though he is raised to a high position' in the king *pakṣa*. I base my translation on Jonarāja's comments on the poetic composition *pakṣa*: 'Even though it has grown to a composition of words that contains bombastic language (*sāḍambara*).' *sāḍambarāyāṃ śabdaracanāyāṃ rūḍho 'pi* [...]. Slaje translates 'Auch wenn auf Wörterpomp gebaut [...].'

2.33: Jonarāja describes the true skill of a poet like so: 'Through effort, not through easy facility' (*helā*). *prayatnena. na tu belayā*.

2.34: Here we get another metaphor to explain the 'crookedness' that is at the core of Mañkha's imagination of poetic speech. Here it seems to be a graceful curving movement, as a bow when drawn taut. Mañkha uses the well-worn pun: *guṇa* means both 'good quality' and 'bowstring.' Jonarāja: 'Well-spoken verse is a bow, and its very crookedness is laudable.' *sūktir eva dhanurlatā tasyā vakratvam eva stutyam*.

2.36: I have translated Mañkha's interjection *āḥ* as an adjective to *kaṭṭayam* for English stylistic reasons. It would be more accurately rendered as simply 'Damn!' As Jonarāja explains: '*āḥ* [is used in the sense of] anger.' *āḥ kope*. Jonarāja glosses Mañkha's *lakṣaṇam* as 'the accomplishment of poetry,' *kāvyaśāḍhanam*. 'Yet eagerly engrossed in forcing their way up to the sky' is my translation of Mañkha's *vyagrā haṭhoḍḍayanabhūmni*, lit. 'engrossed in the multitude of times (*bhūmni*, Jonarāja gloss *bāhulye*) of soaring up through force (*haṭha*).'

2.37: Here I translate *śikhidīpa* (lit. 'flame-lamp') as 'oil lamp,' since the comparison demands a common everyday type of lamp and a more exalted type. As Jonarāja states: 'A lamp is extinguished by a swift wind, but not a jewel lamp. Like so, a common poem is abandoned through investigation. A great poem on the other hand is respected.' *vegavatā vātena dīpaḥ sāmyati. na tu ratnadīpaḥ. tadvat parikṣayā sāmānyakāvyaṃ tyajyate. mahākāvyaṃ tv ādriyata ity arthaḥ*.

2.38: This verse compares a properly composed poem to a balanced cocktail of sorts, known as *pānaka*. Jonarāja defines *pānaka* as ‘a particular sort of drink made from sugar, pepper, and other ingredients.’ *śarkarāmaricādikṛtapānaviśeṣasya* [...]. While Mañkha does not make any explicit mention of pepper, Jonarāja supplies the needed reference in his commentary: ‘You must know the pepper (*marica*) which is the accumulated [knowledge] of the various scientific treatises because it is very sharp/pungent.’ *nitāntam tikṣṇatvān nānāśāstraparicayaṃ maricaṃ jānīhi*. While the use of a drink as a metaphor for aesthetic savour (*rasa*, lit. ‘juice’) is found throughout Sanskrit literary theory, this use of the mixture of pepper and sugar echoes of Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvali*, 4.41, in which sugar and spice are put in to a single piece of rock candy:

tyāgaśīlamayo rāja tejasvī bhavati priyaḥ |
śarkarāmodako yadvad clāmaricakarkaśaḥ ||
 A powerful king becomes dear
 Consisting of generosity
 Like a sweet, hardened outside
 With cardamom and pepper.

Here too the sweetness and the sharpness are contrasted as the essential contradictions in kingship coming into balanced harmony in a candy.

2.39: *kaviṃṇḍalacakraṇartī*. Here Mañkha uses the word *maṇḍala* in its political sense, meaning the territories surrounding the overlord.

2.40: *Gāvaḥ*, ‘cows’ here also has the sense of ‘speech.’ Mañkha continues the idea of the emperor of poetry in this verse. Here many (*bahūnām*) are able to produce measured (*mita*) poetry, however it is only the rare special someone (*kaścit*) who is able to become the true overlord of poets (*ka-vīśvara*). As Jonarāja states: ‘Many are merely the makers of verse. On the other hand, an author who is a poet is hard to find. This is the meaning.’ *padyamātrakartāro bahavaḥ santi. prabandhakartā tu kavir durlabha ity arthaḥ*.

2.43: ‘Other poets’ Jonarāja states: ‘They make poems according to the meanings that have already been elucidated by other poets. This is the meaning.’ *parakavibhir ullekhitasyārthasyānusāreṇa kāvyam kurvanti arthaḥ*. ‘that special one’ translates Sanskrit *kaścit*. ‘Who undertakes to spend all divinely earned wealth of his own poetic inspiration,’ literally ‘he by whom the divine expenditure (*vyaya*) was undertaken of the great wealth that is his own inspiration.’

2.44: While this verse is one long sentence in Sanskrit, I have made it into three for clarity. 'Skilled creators' *kṛtinām*. *Kṛtin* is a difficult word to translate, and seems to gain more importance over time. The basic idea seems to be a man of good social standing who has the authority to act ritually or otherwise. 'A new indirect beauty,' *navīnavakṛima*. Here again Maṅkha's idea of 'crooked speech' (*vakratā, vakrokti, vakṛima*) is the highest sort of new poetry. The word *navīna*, 'new,' also highlights a transformation of the old, since it is also the word for freshly churned butter. 'Intellect,' *vyutpatti*. While *pratibhā* is necessary, the poet's education is what separates out the poetry which can defeat the words of the wicked. As Jonarāja comments: 'For good people dive, as it were, into the lake of nectar upon hearing the poetry of others.' *sajjanā hi parakāvyaśravaṇād amṛtasarasīva majjanti*.

2.45: 'Graceful beauty' *vilāsam*. *Vilāsa* is a kind of way of acting that is both innate and joyful. This is associated with women of natural charm and grace and kings in full control of their sovereignty. Jonarāja specifically ties this ascension to the throne with mastery of scientific treatises, that is to say with *vyutpatti*. He writes: '[One] becomes a king among poets (*kavirāja*) through study (*abhyāsa*) of various sciences. This is the meaning. For that very reason, [he is] accepting the graceful beauty (*vilāsa*) consisting of language, which has not been obtained by anyone else as if it were an offering (*dhaukanaka*) given by Sarasvatī. For an emperor (*samrāt*), an offering (*dhaukanaka*) is appropriate.' *nānāśāstrābhyāsenā kavirājo bhavatīty arthaḥ. ata eva sarasvatī dattaṁ dhaukanakam iva bhaṇitipraktikam vilāsam ananyaprāptam grhṇan. samrājaś ca dhaukanakam ucitam*.

2.46: I have made what sense of this verse as I could. I have added the contrastive 'but' in the English translation to draw the distinction that I think the image merits. Here again the idea of *vakra*, which I have translated as 'indirect language' is key and is compared to the arms and armor of the warrior.

2.47: I translate Maṅkha's *vyutpattipārāyaṇam* as 'course of education.' Jonarāja glosses this as 'the study of various treatises,' *nānāśāstrādhyāyanam*. 'Although slender in its curvature' is a translation of Maṅkha's *kṣīṇāpi*. The sixteenth part of the moon (*indukalā*) is imagined as a curve, bent like indirect language. These two things, indirect language and the slim crescent of the moon, are all the more beautiful for their crookedness.

2.48: ‘Self-confidence’ translates Mañkha’s *prāgalbha*. ‘Secret knowledge’ translates Mañkha’s *kramopaniṣad*. While Jonarāja glosses the entire compound *kramopaniṣad* as *rahasyam*, he does not provide any hints on how to take *krama*. Jonarāja writes: ‘Uneducated poetry produces repugnance like an unripe *kapittha* fruit being tasted. This is the meaning. The dictionary states that *kapittha*, *grāhi*, and *manmatha* are used in the sense of *dadhittha*. *Śālāḍu* is used in the sense of [its] unripe fruit.’ *avyutpattikāvyam carvitam sad āmakapitthavad vairasyam janayatīty arthaḥ*. ‘*dadhitthe syuḥ kapittha-grāhimanmathāḥ. āme phale śālāḍuḥ syāt’ iti koṣaḥ*.

2.49: Jonarāja comments: ‘The prologue is bombastic [and] charming [but] in the end is without aesthetic savour.’ *āmukha āḍambaro manoramah paryavasāne nīrasa ity arthaḥ*.

2.50: I translate *duratikramakramakathinatāyogād yeṣāṃ* somewhat freely as ‘Since they resort to tortuous syntax/No one can unravel.’ More literally it reads ‘because of their connection with a harshness which is a sequence (*krama*) that is difficult to overcome (*duratikrama*).’

2.51: Jonarāja seems to read *iha* for the edition’s *iva*. My translation follows Jonarāja though I reproduce the edition’s text. ‘Arrangements of words’ translates Mañkha’s *rīti*. Here I think it means more than just ‘style,’ since the metaphor demands that just as waves arise in uninterrupted sequence, so too arrangements of words rise and swell continuously. Jonarāja writes that the meaning is ‘authors of great poems are rare.’ *prabandhakāriṇo vīralā[b]*.

2.52: This verse remains obscure to me. I reproduce Jonarāja’s commentary in its entirety to help others perhaps understand the sense. He writes: ‘What bold (*pragalbha*) person, whose eyes are shut [that is to say] who see little would be capable in regard to the splendor of speech in so far as the poet is unparalleled (*apūrvā*). May he be far from those who see little. They are not fit to even hear a divine poem made by others, how then [would they be fit] to praise [one]. This is the sense. How again would Śeṣa, the King of Serpents be obtained upon the surface of the earth, since he is the Emperor of the Serpent Realm? Śeṣa, having heard such a splendor of speech (*vāgullāsa*) with his two thousand eyes, because his ears are his eyes, would extend his two thousand tongues in praise [that is to say] in praise of the divine poetry. For Śeṣa, having heard that that is poetry, becomes full of wonder and praises [it]. This is the meaning.’ *sa kaver apūrvatvād divye vāgullāse*

*viṣaye śrotṛtve ca kaś carmacakṣur jano 'lpadarśī pragalbhaḥ samarthah syāt.
alpadarśinām dūrato 'stu. anyakṛtaṃ divyaṃ kāvyam śrotum api te na yo-
gyāḥ. kutaḥ punaḥ stotum iti bhāvaḥ. sa punaḥ śeṣo nāgarājo bhūmaṇḍale
kuto labhyaḥ. tasya nāgalokeśvaratvāt. yaḥ śeṣaḥ evaṃvidhaṃ vāgullāsaṃ
cakṣuḥśrutitvād drṣṭisahasradvayena śrutvā tatstutau divyakāvyaśave
jībhāsahasradvayīm prasārayet. śeṣo hi tat kāvyam śrutvā sāścaryo bhūtvā
stautīty arthaḥ.*

2.53: In this verse Sarasvatī, the Goddess Speech, is dejected since her favorites have all passed on. It is tempting to see a bit of *śleṣa* in some of the descriptions of the poets, most clearly *vighaṭite bāṇe*, 'Since Bāṇa/the arrow is broken.' *viśādasprśaḥ* agrees with *vāgdevyāḥ*. The enjambment is perhaps noteworthy. 'Sorrowing eyes' translates *mantuvidhurā ... drśayaḥ*. Jonarāja glosses *mantuvidhurāḥ* as *śokaglānāḥ*.

2.54: This verse relies on the two senses of the word *vibudha*, meaning both 'god' and 'wise man.' While in heaven Kāvya, as the preceptor of the demons, is always kept in mind, here on earth, no wise men hold *kāvya* in their minds.

2.57: Jonarāja sums up this verse and its image by stating that true poetic speech's 'wandering about is unobstructed on every path because of the supernatural power (*prabhāva*) of the foot unguent.' *pādalepaprabhāvāc ca sarvapatheṣu nirnīrodhaḥ saṃcāraḥ*.

2.58: Following Jonarāja, 'for a long time' translates *haṭha*, which usually means something like 'violence' or 'force.'

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On the ‘Bengali school’ of commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya*

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1. *Introduction*

The present paper shifts the attention of the volume from the actual poems and the historical information contained therein to a closely connected genre of literature, namely, the commentaries on these poems. In doing so, this article aims to explore various historical data about the authors of the given works and reconstruct the intellectual environment in which they were active. In addition to this line of inquiry, this paper touches upon the phenomenon of commentarial schools of interpretation that allows, in the long run, to look at these works as witnesses to the history of transmission (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) of the poem they interpret.

During the preparation of my doctoral dissertation,¹ I collected a large number of published and unpublished Sanskrit commentaries on the famous sixth-century poem *Kirātārjunīya* (Kirāṭ) by Bhāravi. Studying these works, I became keenly aware of the widespread phenomenon of textual reuse prevalent in this literary genre. While the repetition of simple glosses as well as explanations pertaining to the technicalities of grammatical forma-

¹ See Klebanov 2016. Note that the present paper builds upon and updates the findings presented in Chapter 2 of my doctoral dissertation, which is available online: <https://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/handle/ediss/8170>.

tions could be, hypothetically at least, explained by a certain like-mindedness of the authors as well as their shared intellectual environment, I have, time and again, encountered cases where the affinity between two or more commentaries could not be satisfactorily explained in any other way but by postulating a direct (or indirect, that is, via another intermediate text) borrowing. In my opinion, the strongest arguments for this linear dependency of texts can be made in cases where commentaries coincide in terms of complex structural elements, as gathered in Klebanov 2020, 533–534 under, perhaps, the somewhat misleading heading ‘stating the intended meaning.’ These are cases where commentaries provide interpretations of complete verses or individual words beyond mere glossing and engage in some sort of literary criticism. These statements can occupy different positions within a given text as the authors may variously frame them into introductory statements (*avata-ranīkāś*), secondary explanatory passages, alternative explanations (such as fanciful identifications of hidden meanings, etc.) and, to a lesser degree, poetological analyses of given poems.² In my experience, the correspondence of these complex explanatory elements, more often than not, aligns with less significant cases of agreement (identical glosses, etc.), thus strengthening the hypothesis of the close connection between the studied texts.³

Based on the above observations, I was able to identify several groups of commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya* connected to each other by the phenomenon of textual reuse. In order to contextualise and study this phenomenon, I propose to consider these groups as forming distinct commentarial schools (or schools of interpretation of a given poem). Commentators be-

² For the method of analysing Sanskrit commentaries on *kāvya* into constituent structural elements, see Klebanov 2020. Refer to page 533ff. for further explanations on the elements concerned with ‘stating the intended meaning.’ Various strategies of textual reuse pertaining to these complex elements, including the oft occurring phenomenon of changing their position within a given text (that is, for example, reframing an explanatory passage from a source text into an introductory statement in the target text) were surveyed in Klebanov 2020, 562–585 and need not be repeated here.

³ For the purpose of completeness, I would like to add that I neither consider this observation particularly novel nor think that it is limited to commentaries on poetry alone. Goodall and Isaacson (2003, lx–lxi) explain, for example, that in their edition of Vallabhadeva’s commentary on the *Raghuvamśa*, they refer to Jinamudra’s glosses as a parallel, because ‘the dependence of the latter upon the former [is] clear beyond doubt.’ Similarly, three commentaries on the *Kāvyaaprakāśa*, a work of *alaṃkāraśāstra*—by Māṇikyaçandra, Someśvara and Jayanta Bhaṭṭa—provide an example (just one among many) of obvious textual reuse in commentaries on other literary genres. For further examples of textual reuse, see Freschi and Maas 2017.

longing to such a school would then share a common understanding about the overall analysis and interpretation of a given poem⁴ and compose their respective commentaries in order to address, for example, the specific didactic needs of their audience, to supplement older texts with additional information (such as technical grammatical analysis, etc.) that they may perceive as missing, or, perhaps, to reiterate the existing authoritative interpretations of the text thus 'updating' their validity.

In this paper I will look at one such commentarial school that consists of four unpublished commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya*—namely, the *Kirāta-pañjikā* (KiPa) by Suvarṇarekha, the *Sārāvalī* (SāĀ) by Harikaṇṭha (or, Śubhakaṇṭha), the *Kirātacandrikā* (KiCa) by Pītāmbara and the *Subodha-ṭīkā* (SuṬī) by Ṭalaṇa.⁵ Unlike another group of commentators that chiefly followed the interpretations proposed by Mallinātha, the medieval champion of the genre from Andhra Pradesh,⁶ and spanned over several centuries and several regions of South Asia,⁷ the authors belonging to the current school can be viewed as comprising a distinct local tradition of interpreting the *Kirātārjunīya*. As I will argue on the following pages, at least two of the four authors listed above—Harikaṇṭha and Pītāmbara—were likely to hail directly from the Bengal area, while Ṭalaṇa, for whom we lack any historical information, though likely flourished in Nepal, could have had access to the interpretations of the earlier scholars either from the manuscripts of their

⁴ As copiously demonstrated in Goodall 2001 as well as Goodall and Isaacson 2003, these common interpretations may often guide a commentator to accepting particular readings of a poem as being authentic or more preferable.

⁵ Note that in my previous publications on this subject (Klebanov 2016 and 2020), I erroneously referred to the author of the *Subodhaṭīkā* as Ḍalaṇa, Ḍallaṇa or even Ḍalḥaṇa. I believe this mistake arose mainly from two factors: first, a plain mis-transcription of the introductory verse (see note 12 below); second, and more significantly, a cognitive error (possibly source confusion). In this case, I inadvertently substituted the name of Ḍalḥaṇa, the well-known commentator on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, with that of the *Subodhaṭīkā*'s author, due to my familiarity with Ḍalḥaṇa's work, leading me to conflate the two names in my memory. A similarly erroneous entry can be found in the New Catalogus Catalogorum (NCC) vol. 39 (Dash 2015, 290b): 'Subodhā, name of C. by Talḥaṇa alias Tallaṇa on *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravi.'

⁶ For a critical review of various biographical data about Mallinātha and a study of his oeuvre, see Khāṭuya 2003.

⁷ See, for example, the largely popular *Prasannasāhityacandrikā* by Ekanāthabhaṭṭa (ca. sixteenth century, Maharashtra ?), or the *Pradīpikā* by Dharmavijayagaṇi (seventeenth century, Gujarat), to name but a few examples of commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya* that obviously borrow from Mallinātha.

commentaries transmitted in Nepal or, just possibly, through completing his education in Bengal or under the guidance of a Bengali teacher.

A few summarising remarks are due on the rationale behind posing a strong affinity between the commentators listed above. *Kirātacandrikā*'s dependence on the *Sārāvalī* can be postulated directly because of Pītāmbara's acknowledgement of this fact (see below). For postulating Ṭalaṇa's reliance on Pītāmbara's commentary (or, perhaps, on both commentaries by Harikaṇṭha and Pītāmbara), on the other hand, I draw exclusively on the distinct parallelism between these texts. Several undeniable instances of parallelism in commenting on KirāĀ 1.7 (which, among other things, contains a striking example of a fanciful *śleṣa* interpretation common and exclusive to the three commentators)⁸ were scrutinised in Klebanov 2020, 562ff., but can be further illustrated by examining nearly every verse of the poem.⁹ The *Kirātapañjikā*, on its part, is arguably an ancient commentary written in a markedly laconic style that often limits its discussions of entire verses (and even chapters) to a few passing remarks. As such, it does not contain many explanatory passages that could be compared to those found in the other three commentaries. Still, *Kirātapañjikā* supplies comparatively elaborate explanations to the verses found in the first chapter of the *Kirātārjunīya*, which, indeed, can be often matched with those found in the *Sārāvalī* and, likely secondarily, in the *Kirātacandrikā* and the *Subodhaṭikā*. Furthermore, I was able to identify a few rare quotations and a distinct technical grammatical discussion (on both, see below) that are found exclusively in the *Kirātapañjikā*, the *Sārāvalī* and the *Kirātacandrikā*, and that, in my view, suggest that the latter two likely borrowed them from the former.¹⁰

⁸ For the alternative interpretation, the commentators rely on the meanings of the monosyllabic words *ī*, 'Lakṣmī,' and *a*, 'Viṣṇu.'

⁹ As a matter of fact, given that both the *Sārāvalī* and the *Kirātacandrikā* are available to me each in a single manuscript, in reconstructing these texts for my ongoing critical edition, I often draw help from the readings transmitted in more numerous manuscripts of the *Subodhaṭikā*.

¹⁰ A further minor point (so minor that it deserves no more than a mention in a footnote) is Suvarṇarekha's alternative interpretation of the nominal *avana-* in KirāĀ 1.1 as *viṣṇuvana-*, thus interpreting *a* as a monosyllabic word meaning 'Viṣṇu.' Though this interpretation of the verse is not found in any other commentary, the *Sārāvalī*, the *Kirātacandrikā* and the *Subodhaṭikā* make use of the monosyllabic *a* in proposing an alternative interpretation of KirāĀ 1.7 (see note 8 above).

Concerning the relationship of the *Kirātapañjikā*, the *Sārāvalī* and the *Kirātacandrikā* to Bengal, the central piece of evidence is provided by the various text-historical data that can be gleaned from Pītāmbara's work. Among other evidence produced in the section dealing with this commentary, I would like to highlight Pītāmbara's close acquaintance with the Bengali grammatical tradition, including some of its works that, until the advent of book printing, had not circulated outside the region. The *Sārāvalī*, the major source of inspiration for Pītāmbara's *Candrikā*, was not only preserved in a handful of MSS located or produced exclusively in the concerned region,¹¹ but similar to the former commentary, it utilises some of the most significant works of the Bengali grammatical tradition that were almost certainly unknown outside of the regional scholarly milieu. The evidence for *Kirātapañjikā*'s relationship to Bengal is less compelling. However, the fact that this text was known to an early medieval commentator on poetry and the grammarian Śaraṇadeva is in itself sufficient to show that it was circulated in the region relatively soon after its composition. The final commentary, the *Subodhaṭikā* by Ṭalaṇa, about whom nothing further is known,¹² presents hardly more than an abbreviation and a recast of Pītāmbara's *Candrikā*. Given that all eight MSS of the work originated in Nepal,¹³ I assume that the author hailed from this region as well.

Given that the present paper concentrates on the historical information about the authors of these commentaries, in the main section I will look only at Suvarṇarekha, the author of the *Kirātapañjikā*, and Pītāmbara, the author of the *Kirātacandrikā*, because I was not able to identify any relevant information about the other two scholars. In the following, I provide a detailed overview of historical information about these authors that I gathered based on various evidence internal or external to their works.

¹¹ Among the three manuscripts listed in NCC 4 (Raghavan 1968, 165), I have access to a composite manuscript held at the India Office Library in London, United Kingdom (IOL San.MS I.O. 543).

¹² The only information about the author of the *Subodhaṭikā*—specifically, his name—that I have been able to identify so far is provided by a short introductory verse: *nānāgranthān samālokyā śrīmaṭṭalaṇaśarmaṇā | kirāte kriyate ṭikā subodbākhya mānoramā ||* 'Respected Ṭalaṇa Śarmā, after studying several works, composes a delightful commentary called "Subodhā" on the *Kirāt[ārjunīya]*.'

¹³ For a detailed description of these manuscripts, see Klebanov 2016, 112–114.

2. *Kirātapañjikā* by Suvarṇarekha

2.1 *Material sources*

The *Kirātapañjikā* by Suvarṇarekha is neither listed among the commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya* in NCC vol. 4 (Raghavan 1968, 161ff.), nor in vol. 39 (Dash 2015, 367) under the entry ‘Suvarṇarekha.’ Its text is accessible to me in the form of digital microfilm scans of a composite manuscript discovered and preserved by the efforts of the NGMPP. The manuscript was filmed twice: once, under the reel number G 108-13 (on 29/7/1979) and for the second time, under the reel number E 1170-8 (on 1/3/1981). The title cards to both microfilms provide conflicting information about the original place of deposit of the actual manuscript: according to the earlier card (G 108-13), the manuscript was held at the private collection of Rajopadhyaya, while the later entry (E 1170-8) attributes ownership to an individual named Madan Mishra. Consequently, neither the original nor the current location of the artefact can be determined with certainty.¹⁴

The supposedly single manuscript bundle consists of two independent incomplete codicological units, both transmitting the text of the *Kirātapañjikā*. Both codicological units are written on palm-leaves using similar, somewhat archaic varieties of the Newari script, and the folios appear to be the same size (30.1 x 5.2 cm, according to the title cards). To distinguish between both the units, for analytical purposes, I will call the first unit S_1 and the second S_2 .

S_1 consists of only five folios numbered in the left-hand margin of each verso with a letter numeral. It contains the text of the *Kirātapañjikā* from the beginning up to the end of the commentary on KirāĀ 1.28.

S_2 consists of 59 folios written by several scribes and numbered with figure numerals in the left-hand margin of each verso. The numbering is somewhat inconsistent (at times, certain numbers are repeated, while others are omitted), and it likely reflects upon the nature of this manuscript as a collaborative project carried out by several scribes. The first three folios of the manuscript are slightly damaged. However, it is almost complete, missing, perhaps, just a single folio at the beginning, as the preserved text begins at the end of the commentary on KirāĀ 1.1, and extends up to the end of the *Kirātārjunīya* (i.e. KirāĀ 18.47).¹⁵ S_2 ends with what appears to be an au-

¹⁴ For the current location of the manuscript, it is possible that it was incorporated into the larger collection of the National Archives in Kathmandu.

¹⁵ Note that Mallinātha and several other commentaries propagated an extended

thorial colophon but, unfortunately, lacks any concluding statement by the scribe that could help dating or locating the copying enterprise. In contrast to this, S₂ preserves the chapter colophons to each of the 18 cantos of the poem. The colophons are expressed using one of the following formulaic wordings:

1. KirāĀ 1 (8r5):¹⁶ *iti kavirājasuvarṇṇarekha viracitāyām*
bhāraviracitāyām [!] *prathamah sarggaḥ*
2. KirāĀ 2 (12r6), 5 (23v6), 7 (26v1), 8 (29r4): *iti*
kavirājasuvarṇṇarekha kṛtāyān kirātapañjikāyām dvitīyah (etc.)
sarggaḥ
3. KirāĀ 3 (14v6), 4 (18r7), 11 (35r6), 13 (35r6): *iti*
suvarṇṇarekha kṛtāyān kirātapañjikāyām tṛtīyah sarggaḥ
4. KirāĀ 6 (27v5): *iti mahopādhyāyasuvarṇṇarekha kṛtāyān*
kirātapañjikāyām śaṣṭhaḥ sarggaḥ
5. KirāĀ 9 (33v5), 10 (34v1), 14 (39r8): *iti suvarṇṇarekhe navamaḥ*
(etc.) *sarggaḥ*
6. KirāĀ 12 (36r4): *suvarṇṇarekha tīkāyām dvādaśaḥ sarggaḥ*
7. KirāĀ 15 (44v7): *iti kavirājasuvarṇṇarekha kṛtāyān*
kirātapañjikāyām pañcadaśaḥ sarggaḥ samāptaḥ
8. KirāĀ 16 (48r4): *kirātapañjikāyām ṣoḍaśaḥ sarggaḥ samāptaḥ*
9. KirāĀ 17 (53r1), 18 (59r3): *kirātakāvya tīkāyām saptaśaśaḥ* (etc.)
sarggaḥ samāptaḥ

For the sake of completeness, I would like to acknowledge the fact that the colophons to the last three chapters do not mention Suvarṇṇarekha, and

version of the *Kirātārjunīya* that contained a further verse 18.48. This verse brings the focus of the poem back to the model king Yudhiṣṭhira as the main protagonist and was likely added to align the overall didactic purport of the *Kirātārjunīya* with the teachings of the *arthaśāstra*. That the identification of the main protagonist of the *Kirātārjunīya* was a topic of some concern is supported, for example, by substantial discussions of the problem in the commentaries by Vidyāmādhava (fl. mid-fourteenth century in the early Vijayanagara empire, most likely before Mallinātha) and Citrabhāṇu (no biographical information available). The assumption that 18.48 is a later addition is corroborated not only by the fact that it is lacking from all the earlier commentaries on the poem (including the two oldest exegetical works by Prakāśavarṣa and Suvarṇṇarekha) but also by the fact that, unlike 18.47, it lacks Bhāravi's signature word *lakṣmī* that is otherwise found in every last verse of each canto of the *Kirātārjunīya*.

¹⁶ Note that here and elsewhere in the article, the folio numbers correspond to the numbers found on the individual folios of the quoted manuscript and may not reflect the actual number of a folio in the bundle.

that the colophon to chapter 15 differs from all the preceding formulations in that it adds the word *samāptaḥ* at the end. If taken seriously, this alternation in wording could suggest that S_2 transmits the text of the *Kirātapañjikā* only for the first 15 cantos of the *Kirātārjunīya*, and for the remaining three chapters, supplies the text of a different commentary. However, in absence of any further evidence for this interpretation, and given that the commentary on KirāĀ 16–18 preserved in S_2 does not differ in style from the main bulk of the text, I consider the final three colophons to provide a mere verbal variation.

On the relationship between S_1 and S_2 , there are no indications of any linear dependency between both manuscripts in terms of stemmatic analysis, as they do not share any identical lacunas or characteristic scribal errors. From the point of distribution of variants, however, an interesting case is observed in the commentary on KirāĀ 1.9. Here, S_2 contains two quotations from the *Kauṭilyārthśāstra*. The first quote (corresponding to a single line in Jolly and Schmidt 1923, 23) contains a plain statement that a king should subdivide his day and night into eight parts each. It is introduced by *yathāha kauṭilyaḥ*, ‘as says Kauṭilya,’ and closed with a quotative *iti*. It is immediately followed by a second much longer quotation of another prose passage from the same text that covers almost a whole page in Jolly and Schmidt 1923, 23ff. The cited text elaborates on the above sixteen-fold division of day and night and prescribes the exact kind of activities that a king should attend to during each time slot. Hence, S_2 closes the quote with *iti ṣoḍaśadhā naktamdivavibhāgaḥ*, ‘this is the sixteen-fold division of day and night.’ S_1 , for its part, contains the first quote (embedded in *yathāha kauṭilyaḥ ... iti*) and proceeds with the first sentence of the elaboration (that pertains to the first part of the day). However, it abbreviates the remaining fifteen parts with a single sentence *evam sarvatra*, ‘in the same way in all [other parts of day and night],’ which is followed by the closing sentence *iti ṣoḍaśadhā naktamdivavibhāgaḥ*. Considering that this final remark does not seem to construe well within the text transmitted in S_1 , I believe that among the two available options, the elaborate reading of S_2 is more likely to be original, while the reading of S_1 reflects a deliberate truncation.

2.2 Text-historical data: Internal evidence

2.2.1 Name of the author and the title of the work

So far, I have not been able to find any reference to the title of the work outside of what Preisendanz 2018 calls ‘post-positioned segment titles’ in S_2

quoted above. The majority of these paratexts call the text *Kirātapañjikā*, while others, however, label it *Suvarṇarekha* (chaps. 9, 10, 14), *Suvarṇarekhaṭīkā* (chap. 12), *Kirātaṭīkā* (chap. 16), or *Kirātakāvyaṭīkā* (chaps. 17, 18). The coexistence of these designations seems to suggest that, perhaps, none of them needs to be taken as referring to a particular title given to the work by its author or as pointing to a specific type of a commentary.¹⁷ The words *pañjikā* or *ṭīkā* could be, then, taken synonymously and, perhaps, even further substituted by one of their general equivalents such as *vyākhyāna*,¹⁸ etc., without contradicting the authorial intention. Given that the numerical majority of chapter colophons transmitted in *S*₂ calls the text *Kirātapañjikā*, I have provisionally decided to adopt this title.

Unlike the above hypothetical title, the name of the author is explicitly stated in the opening verse of the commentary (quoted below) and is only secondarily corroborated by the chapter colophons in *S*₂. Several of these colophons call *Suvarṇarekha* *kavirāja*, which could be interpreted either as an official title (cf. Sircar 1966, 152) or as a mere expression of respect for the author's learning and, perhaps, poetic abilities. In view of the colophon to *Kirāṅ* 6 that refers to *Suvarṇarekha* as *mahopādhyāya*, which, on its part, can be interpreted as an ancient academic title (Sircar 1966, 192), it appears likely that the scribes intended a rather generic interpretation of both terms.

2.2.2 Authorial paratexts

In the manuscripts *S*₁ and *S*₂, I was able to locate several verses that, I believe, were composed by the author of the *Kirātapañjikā*. At the beginning of the text (preserved only in *S*₁: 1v1), prior to the commencement of the actual commentary on the *Kirātārjunīya*, we find the following introductory verse in *vasantatilakā* metre:¹⁹

¹⁷ On the apparent conflicts between the technical meanings of the words *pañjikā*, *ṭīkā*, etc., assigned to them in specialised literature, see, e.g. Goodall and Isaacson 2003, xiii n2.

¹⁸ As a matter of fact, in a verse concluding the commentary to *Kirāṅ* 5, *Suvarṇarekha* calls his work a *vyākhyāna*. The concerned verse is reproduced in Klebanov 2016, 99 and is not quoted in this paper.

¹⁹ Note that in quoting the verses here and below I attempt to reconstruct their intended readings by introducing various conjectures. In accordance with this practice, I also silently standardise the sandhis.

durbodhavāgvivaraṇāni kirātakāvyē
nānārthabhāñji vidadhāti* suvarṇarekhaḥ |
tadbhāvatattvam* avagamya vimarśayantaḥ*
santaḥ subhāṣitadhanā manasā vahanu ||*

*durbodhavāgvi°] conj., durboddhagvi° S₁;
vidadhāti] conj., vidhadhādi S₁;
°tattvam] conj., °tatvam S₁;
vimarśayantaḥ] conj., viśarmayantaḥ S₁.*

Suvarṇarekha lays out explanations of difficult passages found in the *Kirātārjunīya*, which touch upon various topics. May the good ones, whose wealth is eloquent speech, understand their true intention and, pondering over them, carry them in their minds.

Despite several uncertain readings, this introductory verse furnishes the name of the author that is further corroborated by the scribal colophons of S₂. Furthermore, it tells the reader what to expect from the present work: explanations of (only) difficult passages found in the poem. As I mentioned in passing in the introduction to this article, this description applies rather well to the actual content of Suvarṇarekha's commentary. As a matter of fact, the *Kirātapañjikā* is rather laconic and often does not go beyond scattered glosses and brief discussions of unusual words, word-forms and syntactic constructions.

Note further that the above verse contains what may be seen as a stylistic defect. Against a wide-spread expectation for an auspicious beginning of a work, Suvarṇarekha sets out with a rather discouraging word *durbodha* (which is, however, immediately followed by auspicious *vāc*). I believe that it is, therefore, possible that Suvarṇarekha could have intended some additional (auspicious) meaning, which, however, has escaped me so far.

Two final verses, the exact reading and the meaning of which remain largely unclear to me, are found on the last folio of S₂ prior to the final chapter colophon. In view of this relative position of both paratexts, I consider these verses to form a part of the main text authored by Suvarṇarekha.

pāreśabdam prayātā dhṛtasakala dhiyas tyaktamātsaryarāgāḥ
santaḥ santaḥ samantāṃ guṇanamitaguṇāḥ* prītim utpādayanti |
vyācakṣāṇās tathā no sadasisitakaveḥ* snehakāruṇya* vṛddhya
doṣam doṣam* yathānye katham api ca guṇam dūṣayanto 'pi duḥkham ||*

°*sakala*°] conj., °*śakala*° S₂;
guṇanamitagunāḥ] conj., *guṇāmitagunānaḥ* S₂;
sadasisitakaveḥ] conj., *sadasitakaveḥ* S₂ (unmetr.);
°*kārunya*°] conj., °*kārunyā*° S₂ (unmetr.);
doṣaṃ doṣaṃ] conj., *doṣaṃ* S₂ (unmetr.).

Tentative translation:

The good ones, who travelled beyond words (i.e. know everything about the language), whose minds are restrained, who abandoned selfishness and passion, whose virtues are measured by multiplication, explaining [one's work] with their great love and compassion do not cause [as much] complete joy to a poet bound in an assembly, as others, finding fault with every mistake and, somehow, even with a merit [cause his] suffering.

The wording of the verse as found in S₂ is corrupt and calls for several emendations necessary not only to interpret the text but also to reconcile it with the pattern of the *śragdharā* metre. Given that I know next to nothing about Suvarṇarekha's poetic style, I have made only minimal conjectural emendations, assuming only errors that can be explained by common scribal mistakes. In this way, in *pāda* C, I inserted the single *akṣara si* in *sadasi[si] takaveḥ*, and in *pāda* D, I added the word *doṣaṃ*, as the omission of both could be attributed to haplography (or eye-skip). The form *sadasisita-*, as a so-called *aluksamāsa* (a *tatpuruṣa* compound in which the grammatical ending of the first member is preserved), parallels the word *pāreśabda-* at the beginning of the verse and could therefore be considered a deliberate stylistic device.²⁰ Similarly, the repetition of the word *doṣaṃ* at the beginning of *pāda* D mirrors the reiteration of *santaḥ* at the start of *pāda* B, creating a form of structural alliteration.

The change from *guṇāmitagunānaḥ* to *guṇānamitagunāḥ* (especially the transposition of *guṇa* and *gunana*) in *pāda* B, may appear a little more forceful. Still, I believe that the latter reading could have occurred as a result of a scribe's minor slip of memory. From the point of meaning, however, one could think of an even stronger intervention in changing the reading of the compound to *mitagunaḥ*, 'who are moderate in enumerating the virtues [of one's composition].' This would allow a more direct juxtaposition in the procedures applied by the noble and the low critics: the former are moderate even in praising the merits of a composition, while the latter

²⁰ The formation *pāreśabdam* is justified by A 2.1.18 *pāre madhye śaṣṭhyā vā*, and the hypothetical form *sadasisita-* can be formed by A 6.3.14 *tatpuruṣe kṛti bahulam*.

readily find faults with every little mistake and even apparent merits. It is, perhaps, possible (though rather strained) to read this meaning into the compound *guṇamitagūṇanāḥ* (thus keeping the general structure of the compound as found in S_2). Perhaps, one could analyse it as a double *bahuvrīhi*: ‘the good are the ones, for whom merits are things, whose enumeration is moderated.’²¹ Another possible conjecture could be to change the form *samantām* (currently, a qualification to *prīti*-) to *samantād* and to interpret the second *santaḥ* also to mean ‘the good ones’: ‘the good ones (*santaḥ*), who are good throughout (*santaḥ samantāt*).’²²

At any rate, the overall purport of the verse seems to correspond to the kind of poems collected, for example, in the *asadvrajyā*, ‘section on villains,’ of the *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa*.²³ Given the parallelism between *vimarsāyantaḥ santaḥ* in the opening and *vyācakṣāṇāḥ santaḥ* in the concluding verses, it is likely that Suvarṇarekha conceived of them as a pair. While in the first verse, the commentator expresses his optimistic hope that his work will be appreciated by noble-minded experts, in the final verse Suvarṇarekha acknowledges the bitter reality of things, as it were, and admits the devastating effects caused by the other kind of readers who only seek to find faults with his composition.

abhavan mahati prajābīte prthukīrtiḥ prathite nṛpānvaye |
mahatām mahānīyavigraho †vibhūdāsasya[short]veni† saṁśrayaḥ ||

This final verse, although written in the relatively short *viyoginī* metre and exhibiting a seemingly clear structure, is corrupt at a critical point in the second half, making it, therefore, impossible to interpret. It could, perhaps, extoll a certain king (whose name remains buried under the corrupted text) who was famous (*prthukīrtiḥ*), whose beauty was respected even among the great ones (*mahatām mahānīyavigraho*), and who was born (*abhavan*) in a great (*mahati*) royal family (*nṛpānvaye*) that was beneficial to its subject (*prajābīte*) and well-known (*prathite*).²⁴

²¹ This analysis of the compound could be expressed as follows: *mitam guṇanam yasya saḥ* = *mitaguṇanah*; *guṇo mitaguṇano yeṣāṁ te* = *guṇamitagūṇanāḥ*.

²² I need to thank Prof. Csaba Dezső who suggested this line of interpretation of the verse.

²³ See Ingalls 1965, 350 for a brief summary of the section.

²⁴ Cf., however, a verse quoted in Rājasekhara’s *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* ch. 6 (Dalal et. al. 1934, 27) that could, perhaps, hint at an entirely different interpretation of Suvarṇarekha’s verse: *khyātā narādhipatayaḥ kavisaṁśrayeṇa rājāśrayeṇa ca gatāḥ kavayaḥ pra-*

At any rate, given the unfortunate corruption in the final verse, these two poems provide us with little more than an assertion that Suvarṇarekha was himself a poet capable of producing rather complex multi-layered compositions. This assertion is further corroborated by two verses found at the beginning and the end of the fifth chapter of *Kirātārjunīya*. Both furnish cases of rather intricate combinations of the figures *śleṣa* and *rūpaka*. As they lack any historical information about the author, they are not discussed here to avoid prolixity.²⁵

2.2.3 Quoted texts

Unlike Mallinātha and many other commentators on belletrist literature, the *Kirātapañjikā* contains only scarce quotations from lexicographical works, some of which, however, are rather significant for the history of the literary genre as a whole. Apart from the 'pretty old' (Vogel 2013, 34) *Śāśvatakośa* quoted in the commentary to KirāĀ 5.13, Suvarṇarekha cites several half-verses from the lost *Samśārāvarta* by Vikramāditya (e.g. in KiPa 1.1 and 5.38) thus supplying new, so far unknown, fragments of the dictionary.²⁶ Furthermore, KiPa 1.1 introduces a citation from the text with *yathoktaṃ samśārāvartane vikramādityena*, 'as it is said by Vikramāditya in the *Samśārāvartana*,' and in this way, substantiates beyond any doubt the correctness of Birwé's reasoning, who convincingly argued for the correlation between the name of the author, Vikramāditya, and the title of his lost work, the *Samśārāvarta*.

The first chapter of the *Kirātapañjikā* contains a number of quotes from several treatises on *arthaśāstra*. Remarkable are two verses attributed to Vātavyādhi, an ancient authority in the field, whose views were so far accessible to us mainly through their mention in the *Kauṭilyārthaśāstra*. The *Rasārṇavālaṃkāra*, a work on poetics by Prakāśavarṣa (fl. after 12 century CE; cf. Sharma 1997, vi), mentions Vātavyādhi as a critical authority on

siddhim | rājñā samo 'sti na kaveḥ paramopakārī rājñe na cāsti kavinā sadṛśaḥ sahāyaḥ ||
'Kings become famous by relying on poets, and poets become popular by relying on kings. There is no ultimate benefactor to a poet matching a king, and for a king there is no assistant equal to a poet.'

²⁵ Both verses are quoted and mistranslated in Klebanov 2016, 98ff. I will provide a detailed analysis of the verses in my forthcoming edition of the *Kirātapañjikā* on KirāĀ 5.

²⁶ See Birwé 1973 for a compilation of fragments from Vikramāditya's lexicon quoted in various Sanskrit sources.

arthaśāstra. The fact that the medieval *ālaṃkārika* spoke of Vātavyādhi's work in present tense can be taken as an (admittedly weak) reason to believe that it was still directly accessible to him.²⁷ In Suvarṇarekha's text, we find Vātavyādhi quoted at least twice, in the commentary on KirāĀ 1.5 and 1.19.

KiPa *ad* KirāĀ 1.5 (S₁: 2v2, S₂: 2v1):

*yathāha vātavyādbhī** —

amātyānām narendrāṇām anyonyaṃ hydaye same |*

āyānti sampadaḥ sarvā* vaiṣarītyāt parāṇ* mukhāḥ ||*

vātavyādbhī] S₂, *nātavyādbhī* [!] S₁;

amātyānām] S₂, *sāmātyānām* S₁;

āyānti] S₂, *āryānti* S₁;

sarvā] S₂, *savā* S₁;

*vaiṣarītyāt parāṇ**] S₂, *vaiṣarītyarā** S₁.

KiPa *ad* KirāĀ 1.19 (S₁: 4v5, S₂: 5r1):

*yathāha vātavyādbhī** —

na saṃhatān na bhinnāmś ca yodhān kuryāt svasiddhaye |

hareyuh sahataṃ vittam bhinnāstenārthabāriṇaḥ ||

vātavyādbhī] S₂, *cāṇakyādbhī* [!] S₁.

The same two verses are anonymously repeated in the respective portions of Harikaṇṭha's *Sārāvalī*, from where they are further reproduced (in a shortened form) in both the *Kirātacandrikā* and the *Subodhā*.

By far more frequent than the sporadic references to Vātavyādhi are Suvarṇarekha's quotes from the *Kautilyārthaśāstra* and the *Kāmandakīya* (also known as *Nītisāra* or *Kāmandakīyanītisāraḥ*). The former text is introduced as *yathāha kautilyaḥ* (e.g. in KiPa 1.9 and 1.11) but also as *yathāha cāṇakyaḥ* in the commentary on KirāĀ 1.18. The latter work, on the other

²⁷ *Rasārṇavālaṃkāra* 4.56cd–57 (Agrawal 2005, 30): *āsīn māheśvaram śāstram atra koṭipramāṇakam || punar tad api saṃkṣiptam atha svāyambhuvaṃ tataḥ | vātavyādhīr api grāṇṭhaḥ saprapaṇcaḥ pravartate ||* 'On this subject (*atra*) there was a core-[verses]-long treatise by Maheśvara, and a short version of that very treatise [was compiled by] Svayambhū. And there is also a lengthy book by Vātavyādhi.' Sharma 1997, iv–v explains that the use of the present tense (*pravartate*) was taken by some scholars to prove the considerable age of Prakāśavarṣa's work, which is, however, contradicted beyond any doubt by numerous other arguments.

hand, is often quoted anonymously (e.g. in KiPa 1.4, 1.9, 1.12 twice, and 1.13), while in the KiPa 1.11 it is referred to explicitly as *tathā coktaṃ kāmāndake*.

In search of a quotation that can help estimate a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the *Kirātapañjikā*, I came across an unusually elaborate (though virtually illegible) discussion on the phenomenon of *upamānavyakti* in KiPa 8.27. Here, Suvarṇarekha quotes Ānandavardhana's original composition found in the *Dhvanyāloka* 2.27.²⁸ Although this verse was repeated in several later works of the Kashmiri *alaṃkāraśāstra* tradition (including Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*, Pratihārendurāja's commentary on Udbhaṭa's *Kāvyaṃkāraśārasaṃgraha*, Mahimabhaṭṭa's *Vyaktiviveka* and Śobhākaramitra's *Alaṃkāraratnākara*) as well as, e.g. in Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnaḥ*, Suvarṇarekha's discussion matches the original context of the verse in the *Dhvanyāloka* and is likely to derive from there.

2.3 Text-historical data: External evidence

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, there are reasons to believe that the text of Suvarṇarekha's commentary was available to Śubhakaṇṭha (or Harikaṇṭha), the author of the *Sārāvalī*, which, on its part, was utilised by Pītāmbara in composing his *Kirātacandrikā* (completed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, on which see below). However, so far, I have not come across any explicit mention of Suvarṇarekha or his work in any commentary on the *Kirātārjunīya*.²⁹ In contrast to this, the view attributed to Suvarṇarekhā [sic!]³⁰ is reported in Śaraṇadeva's *Durghaṭavṛtti*, a work conclusively dated to 1172 CE,³¹ in reference to the form *viditaḥ* from Kirāṅ

²⁸ Śāstrī 1940, 261: *yathā vā mamaiva — lāvaṇyakāntiparipūrītadinmukhe 'smīn smere 'dhunā tava mukhe taralāyatākṣi | kṣobhaṃ yad eti na manāg api tena manye suvyaktaṃ eva jalarāśir ayaṃ payodhiḥ* || For a translation, see Ingalls, Masson, Patwardhan 1990, 331.

²⁹ Note that the only manuscript of the *Sārāvalī* available to me—this text has likely been borrowed from the *Pañjikā*—does not transmit any introductory or concluding verses, which theoretically could refer to author sources.

³⁰ Renou 1940, 61 and, in following him, Wielńska-Soltwedel 2006, vol. 2, 52 consider *Suvarṇarekhā* to be a title of a work.

³¹ In the second introductory verse of the *Durghaṭavṛtti*, Śaraṇadeva furnishes the year in which he completed his work: 'year 1095 of the Śaka era, which corresponds to 1173/74 AD' (Wielńska-Soltwedel 2006, vol. 2, 53). See Renou 1940, 48–50 for further discussion.

1.1. The concerned fragment of the *Kirātapañjikā* is transmitted in (hopelessly corrupt) S_1 , and, indeed, contains a grammatical explanation that, I believe, it is possible to match with the one attributed to Suvarṇarekhā in the *Durghaṭavṛtti*. However, this matching requires further explanations that I would like to summarise in the following.³²

In commenting on approximately 500 rules of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Śaraṇadeva applies a standard procedure: instead of explaining the meaning and the application of each *sūtra* (although he does this in a few rare cases), he cites word-forms that seemingly contradict the application of the specific *sūtra* and proposes a single or, more often, multiple solutions on how this word-form can be substantiated from the viewpoint of the Pāṇinian system. A frequent source for these problematic expressions are verses from various *kāvya*s, among which the *Kirātārjunīya* (identified as such in Śaraṇadeva's text) features about 20 times.

The passage relevant to our discussion appears in Śaraṇadeva's examination of A 7.2.68 *vibhāṣā gamahanavidaviśām*. This rule says that an augment *iṭ* (from A 7.2.66) can be optionally attached to affix *KvasU*³³ (*vasU* from A 7.2.67) when the latter comes after the verbal roots *gam*, *han*, *vid* or *viś*. Now, A 7.2.15 *yasya vibhāṣā* says that the augment *iṭ* is not introduced (from A 7.2.8) when a past passive or a past active participle (*niṣṭhā*³⁴ from A 7.2.14) is formed from a verbal root, with reference to which the optionality of *iṭ* has been taught. Since the rule 7.2.68 teaches optionality of *iṭ* for *KvasU* after the root *vid*, and since 7.2.15 prohibits addition of *iṭ* to the past passive participles formed from any verbal root, for which the optionality of *iṭ* is taught, the combination of both conditions allows to form the p.p.p. *vitta-* but not *vidita-*. This being the case, Śaraṇadeva questions the grammatical correctness of the latter word found in Kirāṅ 1.1:

Durghaṭavṛtti on A 7.2.68 (Gaṇapati Śāstrī 1909, 113):

katham 'viditaḥ samāyayau' iti bhāraviḥ, anena kvasau vikalpe 'yasya vibhāṣā' (7.2.15) iti niṣedhāt

³² A full account of the pertinent grammatical problem and both solutions proposed by Śaraṇadeva is found in Klebanov 2016, 103ff.

³³ *KvasU* (called *vasU* in A 7.2.67) is the affix applied (as a replacement of *LIṭ*) in forming perfect active participles. See D'Avella 2018, 169–246 for an elaborate study of the affix and its use in poetry.

³⁴ *Niṣṭhā* is a technical term introduced in A 1.1.26 *ktaktavatū niṣṭhā*. It designates affixes *Kta* and *KtavatU* applied in forming the past passive and past active participles respectively.

Tentative translation:

How is it that Bhāravi [used the form *viditaḥ*] in '*viditaḥ samāyayaḥ*'?³⁵
Since in view of the optionality [of augment *iT* effected] by this rule with regard to affix *KvasU*, A 7.2.15 prohibits [the application of augment *iT* in forming a p.p.p. of the verbal root *vid* listed in the current rule].

Śaraṇadeva offers two possible solutions. The first option roughly corresponds to the explanation found in the *Kāśikā*. It boils down to saying that 7.2.68 provides optionality for *iT* with reference to the verbal root *vid* in the meaning 'obtaining'³⁶ and not *vid* in the meaning 'knowing'³⁷ and, in this way, does not affect the formation of a p.p.p. from the latter root.

The second option is attributed to Suvarṇarekhā and takes a distinctly different route. It starts out with forming a nominal *vid*, 'knowing,' by adding a zero-affix *KVIP* to the verbal root *vid*.³⁸ In the next step, the newly formed nominal base is supplemented with the taddhita-affix *itaC* (by A 5.2.36)³⁹ that 'occurs to denote the sense of *śaṣṭhī* "genitive"' (Sharma 1999, 535). In this way, the secondary formed *vidita* amounts to mean 'that who has knowledge'.⁴⁰ For understanding *Durghaṭāvṛtti*'s explanation, one needs to bear in mind further that the affix *itaC* applies to nominals belonging to the so-called *tārakādi*-group, which, according to the *Kāśikā*, forms a so-called *ākṛtigāṇa*, 'a type listing,' that is, an open list that can be enlarged by further items.

³⁵ A short note is due on the meaning of the word *viditaḥ* in Bhāravi's poem. The main subject of the sentence is *vanecaraḥ*, 'a forest-dweller,' who returned (*samāyayaḥ*) to Yudhiṣṭhira after carrying out his commands. Different commentaries furnish a variety of options concerning the grammatical formation of the word *viditaḥ*, but they largely fall into two big groups as far as the proposed meaning of the word is concerned. *Viditaḥ* means either (1) 'was known,' i.e. was recognised by Yudhiṣṭhira's security guards as the king's agent and thus granted permission to see him, or (2) 'who knew/obtained knowledge' about Suyodhana's leadership and now returned to Yudhiṣṭhira to give a report about his findings.

³⁶ *Dhātupāṭha* vi.138 (Liebich 1930, 155): *vidḥ lābhe*.

³⁷ *Dhātupāṭha* ii.55 (Liebich 1930, 112): *vida jñāne*.

³⁸ A 3.2.76 *kvip ca* provides for addition of *KVIP* to any verbal root used with or without a preverb.

³⁹ A 5.2.36 *tad asya samjātaṁ tārakādibhya itac*.

⁴⁰ Compare the standard example of the *sūtra* found, e.g. in the *Kāśikā*: *tārakitaṁ nabhaḥ*, 'sky that has stars' (or, as translated in Sharma 1999, 535: 'a sky stubbed with stars').

Durghaṭavṛtti on A 7.2.68 (Gaṇapati Śāstrī 1909, 113):
vedanaṃ vit, kvibantāt tārakāditvād itaci vidita iti tu suvarṇarekhā

Tentative translation:

But Suvarṇarekhā [explains that the word] *viditaḥ* [can be formed when one adds] the affix *itaC* after the nominal *vit*—a synonym of the word *vedana*, ‘knowing’—that ends in affix *KVIP* and belongs to the group of *tārakādi*-words.

The wording of the *Kirātapañjikā* transmitted in S_1 (1r5) appears insufficient and likely corrupt (the following is my transcript of the MS and contains original punctuation):

Kirātapañjikā on KirāĀ 1.1 (S_1 : 1r5)
athavā vedanaṃ vida jñānam | viditaṃ yasya sa tathā |

While I am unable either to interpret the above text on its own, or to propose a satisfactory emendation, I believe that we are likely to approach the intended meaning (and likely the original text) of the *Kirātapañjikā* by looking at the parallel passage in Śubhakaṇṭha’s *Sārāvalī*:

Sārāvalī on KirāĀ 1.1 (H p. 1 l. 5):
yad vā, vedanaṃ vid, viditaṃ samjātaṃ yasya sa viditaḥ, tārakāditvād itac

The wording of *Sārāvalī* seems to suggest that the neuter word *viditaṃ* needs to be taken as a further synonym of *vedanaṃ*, *vid* (or *jñāna*) in the meaning ‘knowing.’⁴¹ The words *samjātaṃ yasya sa* refer the reader to the formulation of A 5.2.36 (see note above), and the final clause *tārakāditvād itac*, though rather formulaic, is nonetheless notably parallel to the formulation in the *Durghaṭavṛtti*. While I remain uncertain about a possible conjecture to the reading of the *Kirātapañjikā* found in S_1 , I believe that its adaptation in the *Sārāvalī* furnishes sufficient evidence for the fact that this remark was at least intended to express the same grammatical explanation as Śaraṇadeva attributed to Suvarṇarekhā. I believe, furthermore, that the confusion between a final *visarjanīya* and a long *ā* can be considered a minor orthographical mistake that could have easily occurred in the transmission of the *Durghaṭavṛtti*. In this way, I believe that it was very likely Suvarṇarekhā,

⁴¹ This formation is provided by A 3.3.114: *napuṃsake bhāve ktaḥ*.

the author of the *Kirātapañjikā*, whose opinion was cited in the twelfth-century Bengali grammatical work by Śaraṇadeva.

A further rather minor piece of evidence for Suvarṇarekha's considerable age and the author's association with Bengal is furnished by the fact that we find two verses attributed to a poet named Suvarṇarekha in Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnaśa*, a collection of verses compiled in Bengal around the twelfth century.⁴² Verse 402 of the collection is not quoted anywhere else, and verse 1048 corresponds to *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1680 (1205 CE, Bengal)⁴³ with the same attribution and to a verse in the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara* (fifteenth century, Bengal)⁴⁴ attributed to Badhirakāvīrāja (lit.: 'deaf king of poets'). As I was not able to detect any pronounced stylistic similarities between these verses and Suvarṇarekha's compositions in the *Kirātapañjikā*, I refrain from quoting these poems here to avoid prolixity. Finally, another curious verse in *anuṣṭubh* metre providing a definition of the word *śṛṅgāra* is attributed to Suvarṇarekha in another grammatical work from Bengal, a ca. thirteenth-century commentary by Ujjaḥvaladatta⁴⁵ on the *Uṇādisūtra* iii.136.⁴⁶

3. *Candrikā* by Pītāmbara

3.1 *Material sources*

The text of the *Candrikā*, which, as far as I can see, remained unnoticed by the compilers of the NCC, is accessible to me in a single manuscript preserved at the National Archives in Kathmandu (NAK), Nepal, under the accession number NAK 4/761. The NGMPP produced two microfilms of the MS (reel nrs. A 1369-12 and B 16-20), and, with the generous support of Dr. Bidur Bhattarai, I was able to procure high resolution digital images of the original manuscript, which form the basis for my study of the text.

NAK 4/761 is a complete and well-preserved palm leaf manuscript written in a variant of the Newari script. The MS contains 223 folios, 37 × 5,5 cm in size, with one string hole in the middle of each folio. The individual palm-leaves are foliated with a figure numeral in the right-hand margin and fur-

⁴² See Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xxxi–xxxix.

⁴³ See Sternbach 1974, 16.

⁴⁴ See Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xxiii.

⁴⁵ On Ujjaḥvaladatta's date see, e.g. Wielńska-Soltwedel 2006, vol. 2, 55–57.

⁴⁶ All three verses are quoted and briefly discussed in Klebanov 2016, 109–111.

nished with an auspicious symbol *śrī* in the left-hand margin of each verso. The manuscript appears to be written by a single rather careful scribe with occasional interlinear and marginal corrections made by the same hand. What is more, the scribe makes copious use of rubrication, special symbols and layout devices to facilitate the reading experience: the *pratīkas* signalling the beginning of a commentary on each new verse are consistently marked with red rubric and separated from the preceding text by additional space, while the chapter colophons are marked, in addition to rubrication and indentation, with *puṣpikās*. The manuscript is endowed with two wooden covers artistically painted with floral patterns. Unfortunately, the manuscript lacks any scribal colophon that could help us contextualise the production of this impressive artefact and acknowledge the diligent work of the copyist.

In my transcriptions of selected passages from the *Candrikā* in this article, I refer to the manuscript with the siglum C.

3.2 Text-historical data

In the brief introductory poem and in the extended twelve-verse-long conclusion of his *Candrikā*, Pītāmbara provides copious information about his work, his family tree and, what is more, the sources he relied upon for the composition of the commentary. In the following, I will first quote these verses in full and, in the next steps, discuss the (text-)historical information that can be gleaned from them and substantiate it with further evidence.

The introductory verse reads as follows:

C 1r1:

vāgdevatācaraṇatāmarasaṃ praṇamya
pītāmbaro *gurunataḥ kurute kirāte |*
ṭikāṃ pramāṇam akhilaṃ svadhīyā vimṛṣya
ṭikāḥ purātanatamā api mānabhūtāḥ ||

Tentative translation:

After paying obeisance to the lotus-feet of the Goddess Speech, Pītāmbara, bowing down to his teacher(s), composes a commentary on the *Kirāt[ārjunīya]*, having himself (*svadhīyā*, lit.: ‘with his own intellect’) reflected upon all the valid sources, including (*api*) the oldest authoritative commentaries.

The concluding verses:

C 222r2:

nyāyāmbhorubabbhāskarāḥ kavivarāḥ sāhityavidyodadhir
vācocyuktiparājitāmaragurur vedāntacintāmaṇiḥ |
aṣṭavyākaraṇīnidhānam* anagho'laṃkārasārārthavin
mīśro 'bhūd dharitāmrakairavanīśānātho dasi [!] **mādhavaḥ** || 1 ||

etatsuto 'bhūn **mayaśarmamīśro** bhūdevagoṣṭhyām atipūjanīyaḥ |
dharmye sthito vartmani bhānubhaktas* tulyoguṇair yo janakena dhanyaḥ || 2 ||
°bhaktaḥ] conj., bhaktaḥ C

prāsāvi **gaṅgāgatimīśra** ebhir mīmāṃsako dhārmika ugramānaḥ |
āvaśyake* karmaṇi yatnakārī kāṣṭhām dvijāter adhitasthivān yaḥ || 3 ||
avaśyake] conj., avaśyike C

ajāyatāsmād guṇasiṃdhunātho naiyāyikaḥ **keśava** ugramānī |
durdambhanaiyāyikavāraṇānām pañcānāno 'sum tyajati sma kāśyām || 4 ||

etatsutaḥ **śrīvanamālimīśro** vibhāti tarkābja* divākaro 'yaṃ |
mānī yaśasvī dvijadharmaharmyaṃ dehaśrīyā nirjitapañcabāṇaḥ || 5 ||
tarkābja°] conj., takkārbja C

eṣām tanūjo gurudevanamraḥ **pītāmbaraḥ śrīmati**mātr̥sūtaḥ |
ṭikām karoti sma kirātakāvyē seyaṃ satām* sampadam ātanotu || 6 ||
satām] conj., satā C

sārāvalīm śrīsubhakaṇṭhaṭikām prākāśavarṣim ca subodhaṭikām |
viśvaprakāśam dharāṇim ca viśvam hārāvalīm śāśvataśabdabhedau || 7 ||

amaram medinikaram puruṣottamadeśanām |
kāvyaprakāśādarśau ca kaṇṭhābharāṇadaṇḍinau || 8 ||

kāśikām upasargasya vṛttiṃ nyāsam ca durghaṭam |
jñāpakam paribhāṣām ca bhāṣāvṛttiṃ sapañjikām || 9 ||

ālokyā candrikākārī kirāte guṇikimkaraḥ |
śāstradhītibhir atyantam prayatnaparamānasaiḥ || 10 ||

bhāṅgnīśikhilakṣye 'bde gaudabhūmīpater mate |
pītāmbaraḥ śivāgrāme sajjanānandadāyini || 11 ||

asyām madīyān avadhānaleśo vṛttaḥ kathamcid yadi cittadoṣāt |
saṃśodhyatām sajjanasūrivargaiḥ kiṃ me khalānām avahelayā syāt || 12 ||

3.3 Date and place of composition

In the eleventh verse of the colophon, Pītāmbara provides us with valuable information about the exact year in which he concluded his work on the commentary, namely, ‘in the year number 335 according to the opinion of the ruler of the Gauḍa-region (i.e. Lakṣmaṇasena)’ (*bāṇa+agni-śikhi-lakṣye ‘bde gauḍabhūmīpater mate*).⁴⁷ It remains unclear, however, if Pītāmbara chose to indicate the ongoing or the expired year,⁴⁸ so that we cannot say with any certainty if the composition was completed in the ongoing year LS 335 or 336. Provided that the epoch year of this era is 1178/79 CE,⁴⁹ we arrive at 1513/14/15 CE.

According to the same verse, Pītāmbara completed his work in the village called Śivāgrāma. So far, I have been able to spot a single historical Śivāgrāma (or Sivāgrāma), today’s Sewa, located to the northeast of the modern township of Didwana (Ḍeṇḍavāṇakaviṣaya in the inscription, see next) near to Jodhpur, Rājasthān.⁵⁰ This village was mentioned in a ninth-century inscription announcing a grant by the famous king Bhojadeva. It goes without saying, however, that in the absence of any further evidence, the identification of Pītāmbara’s village with the one donated by King Bhojadeva remains unwarranted to say the least. Quite on the contrary, the fact that Pītāmbara extensively drew upon Bengali lexicographical, grammatical and commentarial literary sources (see below) suggests not only that the scholar had received his education in this part of India, but also that he conceived his target audience to belong to the same regional tradition. Additional observations such as (1) the fact that soon after its composition the *Candrikā* was transmitted to Nepal, and (2) that some misspellings in the concerned MS (e.g. *tra* for *da*) may point towards its template being written in a Bengali/Maithilī-like script strengthen the hypothesis

⁴⁷ The number is encoded according to the so-called *bhūtasamkhyā* system, in which ‘numbers, are denoted by certain significant words which have numerical association’ (Sharma 2009, 66). Here, *bāṇa* = 5 (the number of Kāma’s arrow) and *agni* = *śikhi* = 3 (the three fire altars in the Vedic ritual). As far as the place value of the numerals is concerned, ‘[i]t may be noted that in all the numerical expressions, the digits are enumerated in the right-to-left order following the maxim *anḱānām vāmato gatīḥ*’ (Sharma 2009, 71).

⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, upon seeing this verse for the first time several years ago, Prof. Harunaga Isaacson spontaneously suggested to emend *mate* in 11B to *gate*, ‘expired.’

⁴⁹ See Salomon 1998, 193.

⁵⁰ Kielhorn 1898–1899.

that the text was composed in Bengal. Against this background, it appears tenable to conjecture that Pītāmbara's Śivāgrāma should be looked for somewhere within the cultural region of Bengal rather than in Rājasthān.

3.4 *The identity of the author*

To begin with, the above-cited verses furnish the name of the author, namely, Pītāmbara, who, as I will explain on the following pages, is also known as Hāritāmra Pītāmbara in reference to his ancestral village Haritāmra. It is noteworthy that in the introduction as well as in verse 6 of the colophon, the author is qualified with similar epithets: *gurunata*, lit. 'bowed to his teachers,' and *gurudevanamra*, 'bowed to his God-like teachers,' respectively. Though, perhaps, not a 'sobriquet' of the author,⁵¹ this description is likely to express a quality of the scholar, which he himself considered characteristic or significant in some other way. What appears more promising for a historical study, is the list of names and the main scholarly achievements of five generations of Pītāmbara's male ancestry furnished in the colophon verses. However, my efforts to identify Pītāmbara's forefathers by matching individual names and positions within the family tree with the lists of authors found in the NCC and in Sternbach (1978, 1980) remained entirely fruitless, as I have failed to trace any of them. In the following, I provide a short summary of Pītāmbara's ancestry tree:

1. Mādhavamiśra (vs. 1): a polymath (scholar of Nyāya, poetry, poetics, Vedānta and grammar), an eloquent speaker, a poet and, possibly, a public servant;
2. Mayaśarmamiśra (vs. 2): a pious man, well-known and respected in the courtly assembly, a worshipper of the Sun, and a man worthy of his celebrated father;
3. Gaṅgāgatimiśra (vs. 3): scholar of Mīmāṃsā, a devout observant of religious duties, who remained dedicated to the duties of a Brahmin;
4. Keśavamiśra (vs. 4): great scholar of Nyāya (*durdambhanaiyāyika-vāraṇānām pañcānanah*, 'a lion among the *naiyāyika*-elephants who are difficult to deceive'),⁵² who died in Kāśī;

⁵¹ On the sobriquets or pen names of classical Sanskrit poets, see a fascinating study by Raghavan 1949.

⁵² Given the metaphorical identification of *naiyāyikas* with elephants (and Keśavamiśra with a lion capable of tearing them apart), it seems appropriate to read *durdama*- (in

5. Vanamālimiśra (vs. 5): Pītāmbara's father, who, just like his own father, studied Nyāya (he was, indeed, *tarkābhjadivākaraḥ*, 'the sun for the day-lotus that is *tarka*'), who was a pious man (*dvijadharma-harmya*, 'a palace for the duties of a Brahmin'), and who is further praised for his good looks (*dehaśriyā nirjitapañcabāṇaḥ*, 'with his bodily beauty he conquered Kāma himself'). He, presumably, married Śrīmati, who became Pītāmbara's mother (vs. 6).

I must confess that at my current state of knowledge, I do not know if in choosing to commence the description of the paternal ancestry with his forefather in the fifth generation, Pītāmbara followed a certain tradition, local or pan-Indian. It appears likely, however, given the grandeur of the epithets and the choice of a longer meter that sets the verse apart from the others, that Pītāmbara took a particular pride in being a descendant of Mādhava Miśra. From verse 1 of the colophon, we learn that the latter was a scholar of Nyāya (*nyāyāmbhoruhabhāskaraḥ*, 'the sun to the day-lotus that is Nyāya'), a good poet (*kavivaraḥ*), a poetician (*sāhityavidyodadhiḥ*, 'an ocean of the science of poetry,' and *alaṃkārasārārthavid*, 'knower of the essential meaning of Alaṃkāraśāstra'), an eloquent speaker (*vācoyuktiaparājitāmaraguruḥ*, 'he conquered Bṛhaspati with his eloquence'), a scholar of Vedānta (*vedāntacintāmaṇiḥ*, 'the wish-fulfilling jewel of Vedānta') and a great grammarian (*aṣṭavyākaraṇīnidhānam*, 'a repository of the eight systems of grammar').⁵³

The string *dasī* found in the final *pāda* of the verse presents a philological problem. In my above reconstruction of the text, I chose not to emend it to highlight the provisional character of the following proposal. I believe that the reading *dasī* could be interpreted as an orthographical variant of *daśī*, provided that, in fact, a confusion between *sa* and *śa* is a common feature of Nepalese manuscripts. Spelled this way (i.e. as *daśī*), this word is used as a technical term in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 7.119 to signify a 'superintendent of ten villages.'⁵⁴ My knowledge of the historical realia of the times does not allow me to judge whether such a position could have been given to a brahmin or not. We know for sure, however, that brahmins were,

place of *durdambha-*) at the beginning of the compound. This, however, violates the metrical restriction and is likely to be the reason for Pītāmbara's choice of vocabulary.

⁵³ I understand the compound *aṣṭavyākaraṇī* as a *dvigu* compound in the meaning of collection (*samāhāra*), 'the collection of eight grammars.' On the eight systems of grammar, see Raghavan 1974.

⁵⁴ See the critical edition of the passage concerned in Olivelle and Olivelle 2005, 633 and its translation on p. 160.

indeed, granted villages, and it is therefore possible to surmise that they might have been also entrusted with their superintendence. The epithet *daśī/dasī* could mean, therefore, that Mādhava Miśra was officially responsible for the overseeing of ten villages.

Finally, verse 1 contains another significant epithet of Mādhava Miśra that describes him as *haritāmra-kairavanīśānatha*, 'the moon for the night-blooming waterlily that is the Haritāmra-family (or, perhaps, the ancestral place of the family).' I derive this interpretation of the word Haritāmra from one of Pītāmbara's own colophon verses found at the end of each chapter of the *Candrikā*, namely, the one concluding the commentary on the final eighteenth chapter of the *Kirātārjunīya*:

C 222r7:

yāṃ candrikāṃ iha karoti kirātakāvyē
pītāmbaraḥ *sma haritāmra-kulodbhavo* 'yāṃ |
tasyāṃ umāpativarārpaṇanāmadheyāḥ
sargo 'gamad vasu-diśā gaṇito 'malāyāṃ ||

Tentative translation:

In this spotless commentary, the Moon-Light that this Pītāmbara, born in the Haritāmra-family (or, in the ancestral place of Haritāmra-family), composed on the poem *Kirāt[ārjunīya]*, the chapter called 'Obtaining Śiva's boon' that is counted with number 18⁵⁵ is finished.⁵⁶

The recognition of Pītāmbara's connections to the Haritāmra-family allows us to hypothetically identify our author with the scholar Hāritāmra Pītāmbara (or, Hāritāmra Śrīpītāmbara), whose name signs two further exegetical works, an unpublished commentary on the *Devīmāhātmya* called *Durgāsaṃdehabhedikā* and a partially published commentary on the *Sattasaī* called *Gāthāsaptasatīprakāśikā*. As a matter of fact, the word *hāritāmra* forming the first part of the latter author's name, is most naturally interpreted as a secondary nominal formation combining the nominal base *haritāmra* with a general taddhita-affix *aN*.⁵⁷ In this way, Hāritāmra could refer to an-

⁵⁵ The number of the chapter is, again, provided with the *bhūtasamkhyā*. Here, *vasu* = 8 (the eight Vasus) and *diś* = 1.

⁵⁶ Here, I supply *agamad [samāptim]* on account of this construction repeatedly used by Pītāmbara in other chapter colophons.

⁵⁷ Cf. Abhyankar and Shukla 1986, 9, who state that the taddhita-affix *aN* is 'prescribed generally in the various senses such as "the offspring," "dyed in," "belonging to," etc.'

yone who is in any way related to the Haritāmra-family. However, given Pītāmbara's preoccupation with Sanskrit grammar, I propose that in the colophon to the *Candrikā* to Kirāṅ 18, he used the word *kula*, lit. 'family (i.e. the sum of ancestors),' in the same meaning as its close synonym, the word *abhijana*, is used in A 4.3.90, namely, the 'ancestral place of residence' (Sharma 1999, 306). Hence, by the application of the same *sūtra* (A 4.3.90), the designation Hāritāmra could refer specifically to an individual 'whose ancestral place of residence is Haritāmra (i.e. the ancestral place of the Haritāmra-family).'

As for the works attributed to Hāritāmra Pītāmbara, for my information about the *Durgāsaṁdehabbedikā*, I draw on the catalogue entry in Sastri 1905, 51 (MS no. 1361 ḍha) and, in addition, on a digital scan of a virtually illegible microfilm of the concerned manuscript prepared by the NGMPP (reel nr. A 56/25 = B 173/20).⁵⁸ While Sastri catalogued this MS at the Durbar Library, by the time it was microfilmed by the NGMPP (November 1970, the date is unreadable), it had been already merged into a larger collection at the National Archives in Kathmandu (accession nr. NAK 1/1361). Sastri's description of the MS matches the one furnished by the title card attached to the MS at the NAK. Among the 54 exposures of microfilm A 56/25 only the first ten are in principle readable, while the rest of the photographs is hopelessly overexposed. With the help of these images, I was able to prepare a tentative transcription of the introductory verse:

NAK 1/1361 1v1:

vācām adbhīsvaṛīm caṇḍīm api natvā yathāmati |
*pītāmbaraḥ karotīmaṁ durgāsaṁdehabbedikām ||*⁵⁹

Tentative translation:

After paying obeisance to the Empress of Speech and to Caṇḍī, Pītāmbara writes this *Durgāsaṁdehabbedikā*,⁶⁰ to the best of his judgements.

⁵⁸ Just before the submission of the present paper, I was able to acquire digital scans of yet another manuscript of the *Durgāsaṁdehabbedikā* kept at the NAK (NAK 4/702 = NGMCP A 477/46). The manuscript is dated to NS 823 ~ 1625 CE and is written in rather clear Newari letters. It allows a much easier reading of the text and, while providing additional data (such as the reading of the second introductory verse that foreshadows the content of the work, that is, a study of grammatical difficult passages of the *Māhātmya*), it largely corroborates all the findings that I made based on the evidence of NGMCP A 56/25.

⁵⁹ Note that NAK 4/702 reads °*bhañjikām* instead.

⁶⁰ In accordance with the conventions I apply throughout this article, I do not

The above verse does not only identify the author of the work as Pītāmbara, it also exhibits clear parallelism with the introductory verse to the *Candrikā*: both begin with the word *vāc* and an obeisance to Goddess Speech, both use the verb *karoti* and add an apologetic remark implying that the author can do only as much justice to the root text as his own intellectual capacities allow.

Further information is provided in Sastri's catalogue, where we find a transcript of the colophon to the thirteenth chapter of the *Devīmāhātmya*:

Sastri 1905, 51

iti **hāritāmraśrīpītāmbara**kr̥tāyām durgāsandebabhedikāyām
trayodaśe māhātmye tadupasaṃbhāravivecanam |

Furthermore, Sastri's entry contains a transcript of the scribal colophon stating that the manuscript was copied by a certain Haladhara at Haripura, on a Tuesday during the month of Bhādra in the year 342 LS,⁶¹ that is, just seven years after the composition of the *Candrikā*. This provides us with an upper limit for the dating of the text that does not contradict with the assumption of the identity of both Pītāmbaras.

As for the *Gāthāsaptasatīprakāśikā*, the other work attributed to Hāritāmra Pītāmbara, Shastri 1942 presents a partial edition of the text that covers the fourth to seventh *śatakas* of the *Sattasāi*. Shastri 1942 used a single largely damaged and incomplete Devanagari MS kept at the Panjab University Library in Lahore. The MS preserves no introduction or conclusion to the text, but all three surviving colophons attribute the commentary to Hāritāmraśrīpītāmbara.⁶² From the point of literary analysis, several features of the *Prakāśikā* mark its difference from the *Candrikā*: the latter commentary analyses every word of a poem and pays special attention to their grammatical derivations, while the former text provides brief paraphrases of the Sanskrit version of each *gāthā*, contains only scarce grammatical remarks and is characterised by a most curious section, in which the author explains how the seemingly 'merely' erotic verses can be read with

translate the title of this work. I assume, however, that the feminine ending of the title assumes something like a head-noun *ṭikā* or *vyākhyā* and that *durgā-* at the beginning of the compound could stand for *Durgāsaptasatī*, another common title given to the *Devīmāhātmya*.

⁶¹ Sastri 1905, 51: *śrīmān imām baladharo 'likhad ambikāyāṣ ṭikām ca vaṃśamaṇir ādyase śeṣamadhye (?) | netrābhirāmayutalakṣmaṇasenavarṣe bhādre kuje haripurē harivāsare drāk ||*

⁶² See Shastri 1942, 5–6.

reference to the remaining three *puruṣārthas*: *dharmā*, *nīti* (that is, *artha*) and *mukti* (consistently printed as *yukti* in Shastri's vulgate). Other characteristics, however, reveal certain parallelism between the *Prakāśikā* and the *Cāndrikā*: both commentaries exhibit a clear tri-partite structure—(1) a section dealing with the overall meaning of a verse, (2) a section discussing technical topics (such as variant readings, grammar, lexicography, poetics, etc.), and (3) a section containing 'further remarks' (which, though only occasional to the *Cāndrikā*, occupies a significant place in the *Prakāśikā*). In their discussions of topics related to the *alaṃkāraśāstra*, both works rely primarily on the *Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa* and only sporadically refer to Daṇḍin's and Maṃmaṭa's manuals. Similarly, in the field of lexicography, both works frequently reference the otherwise rare *Dharaṇikośa* and customarily quote from *Medinikośa*. In the absence of further evidence, it remains difficult to determine whether the above disagreements in content and style are best explained as stylistic variations of a single author—who may have assumed a different target audience for his two texts and may have composed them at different stages of his scholarly career—or whether it is more appropriate to consider Hāritāmra Pītāmbara of the *Gāthāsaptasatīprakāśikā* a distinct individual altogether.

3.5 *Cāndrikā's* textual sources

In verses 7 to 9 of the concluding section to the *Cāndrikā*, Pītāmbara furnishes a comprehensive bibliographic list of sources he used for the composition of his commentary thus providing an insight into the workroom of a medieval *paṇḍita*.

Verse 7ab mentions two commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya*: the *Sārāvalī* by Śubhakaṇṭha (or, Harikaṇṭha) and the *Subodhaṭīkā*, more commonly known as the *Laghūṭīkā*, by Prakāśavarṣa. In view of Pītāmbara's announcement made in the introduction that he consulted 'the oldest authoritative commentaries' on the *Kirātārjunīya*, it is likely that he considered both works to measure up to this appellation. The term 'the oldest' may suggest, furthermore, that Pītāmbara was aware of several commentaries on the poem and that he was conscious of their relative chronology. Among the two mentioned texts, the one authored by Prakāśavarṣa is, in fact, a very old (if not the oldest) commentary on the *Kirātārjunīya* composed around the beginning of the tenth century CE in Kashmir.⁶³ Hari-

⁶³ On Prakāśavarṣa's date see Klebanov 2022.

kaṇṭha's *Sārāvalī*, on the other hand, is a text for which we lack any historical information apart from Pītāmbara's reference. It had likely drawn upon Suvarṇarekha's *Pañjikā* and, for its part, was a major source of inspiration for Pītāmbara's *Candrikā*.

Apropos Pītāmbara's use of other commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya*, it is worth noting that his text seems to show no notice of Mallinātha's celebrated *Ghaṇṭāpatha*, be it in the form of (in)direct quotations of alternative opinions, critical remarks or any other sort of engagements. The recensions of the poem accepted by both the critics are, furthermore, different from each other.

Verses 7bc–8ab give an account of lexicographical works consulted by Pītāmbara. Among the texts that can be identified unambiguously we find (in order of their mention in Pītāmbara's list):

- Maheśvara's *Viśvaparakāśa* (dated to 1111/12 CE), see Vogel 2013, [51];
- Dharaṇidāsa's *Anekārthasāra*, an undated work likely composed in East India (Vogel 2013, [46]); Śāśvata's *Anekārthasamuccaya*, 'a pretty old work, formerly taken to be even older than the Amarakoṣa' (Vogel 2013, [34]);
- Amarasiṃha's *Nāmaṅgānuśāsana*;
- Medinikara's *Nānārthasābdakoṣa* or *Medinīkoṣa*, 'there is good reason to place it somewhere between 1200 and 1275' (Vogel 2013, [74]);
- at least two works attributed to Puruṣottamadeva⁶⁴—*Hārāvalī* and *Varṇadeśanā* (note that verse 7b speaks of *Puruṣottamadeśanā*, but, e.g. in the commentary on KirāĀ 17.62, Pītāmbara provides a less ambiguous name tag: *iti tālavyaśākāraparīkṣāyāṃ varṇadeśanāyāṃ puruṣottamaḥ*).

A somewhat complicated case is provided by the separate mention of three works, the *Viśvaparakāśa*, the *Viśva* and the *Śabdabhedā*, in 7cd. To begin with the last item, the most natural candidate for its identification seems to be the *Śabdabhedaparakāśa* by Maheśvara. Although considered a mere supplement to the *Viśvaparakāśa* by Vogel 2013, [52], this text has been not only

⁶⁴ Vogel 2013, [53] maintains that the lexicographer Puruṣottamadeva was identical with the celebrated grammarian by the same name. Although this ascertainment is contested in modern scholarship (see a summary of opinions in Wieleńska-Soltwedel 2006, vol. 2, 49–50), it is likely that it was shared by the medieval scholar Pītāmbara.

commonly transmitted individually, but was also commented upon, for example, by Jñānavimalagaṇi.⁶⁵ However, the same title—that is, *Śabdabhedaprakāśa* (or *Śabdabhedā*)—is at times applied either to the first section (also called *Dvirūpakōśa*) of Maheśvara's *Śabdabhedaprakāśa*, or to two other less known dictionaries: a short work attributed to Puruṣottamadeva that consists of 57 stanzas, all of which can be traced back to Maheśvara's longer work, as well as another work that is commonly known as the *Dvirūpakōśa* and attributed to Śrīhaṣa.⁶⁶ While I was not able to find any explicit references to any of these works in the *Candrikā*, I traced several cases where Pītāmbara tags quotes from Maheśvara's *Śabdabhedaprakāśa* as deriving from the *Viśvaparakāśa* thus corroborating Vogel's assertion of its dependent status.⁶⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that Pītāmbara's *Śabdabhedā* should refer to a different text (perhaps, the one by Puruṣottamadeva). This brings us to another problem, namely, the understanding of the word *viśva* in 7c. Its interpretation appears particularly puzzling, because Pītāmbara regularly uses this attribution (that is, *iti viśvaḥ*) to identify verses that can be traced in the *Viśvaparakāśa*.⁶⁸ At the moment, I can think of three possible scenarios:

- A possible (though stylistically unlikely) interpretation of the word *viśva* could be to read it as an actual adjective 'entire' qualifying the preceding two *kośas*, the *Viśvaparakāśa* and the *Anekārthasāra* by Dharaṇidāsa. In the case of the *Viśvaparakāśa*, it would imply that Pītāmbara made use of the entire dictionary, that is, the main bulk of the work including its supplement, the *Śabdabhedaprakāśa*.⁶⁹
- Another possible interpretation derives from the above observation that Pītāmbara commonly refers to the verses derived from the actual *Viśvaparakāśa* as *iti viśvaḥ* and uses the long term *Viśvaparakāśa* when referring to verses from the *Śabdabhedaprakāśa*. It appears possible to surmise that Pītāmbara considered the former work to be a dictionary composed by a figure named Viśva (or called *Viśvakośaḥ* for some other reason), and the latter to be called *Viśvaparakāśa*.

⁶⁵ See Kümmel 1940.

⁶⁶ See Kümmel 1940, v–vi.

⁶⁷ See, e.g. *Candrikā* to Kirāṅ 1.9: *tandri tandriś ca tandrīyām iti viśvaparakāśe hravekārānto 'pi śabdah* (= *Śabdabhedaprakāśa* i,115 in Kümmel 1940, 64); or *Candrikā* to Kirāṅ 3.31: *sūkṣmaṁ samūḍhasaraṭastanasūnusāntvam ityādi dantyasakārakathane viśvaparakāśaḥ* (~ iii.43 in Kümmel 1940, 164).

⁶⁸ Note that the wording of Pītāmbara's attribution (i.e. the phrase *iti viśvaḥ*) suggests that he considered Viśva to be the name of the author.

⁶⁹ On the fourfold division of the *Śabdabhedaprakāśa*, see Hahn 2006.

- Finally, it is possible that Pītāmbara's *viśva* refers to yet another dictionary, the *Viśvalocana* (or *Muktāvalī*) composed by the scholar Śrīdharasena 'probably in the first half of the 13th century' (Vogel 2013, [75]). In absence of any further evidence, this proposition remains merely hypothetical.

Another problematic reference to a lexicographical work is found in the running text of the *Candrikā* on KirāĀ 3.37, 5.30 and 8.15, where Pītāmbara unambiguously nametags several quotations as *iti śiloñchaḥ*. The *Śiloñcha* or the *Śiloñchanāmamālā* is a known lexicographical work compiled by Jinadeva Munīśvara in 1376/77 CE and often treated as an appendix to Hemacandra's *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* (Vogel 2013, [62]). The difficulty posed by these citations consists in the fact that they are not found in Jinadeva's text but instead could be considered variant readings of several lines from Hemacandra's work.⁷⁰

Among other unlisted, though noteworthy, lexicographical texts one could highlight Pītāmbara's frequent mention of the *Rudrakośa* and (so far) a single quotation from the ancient *Utpalini* by Vyāḍi, both *kośas* currently considered to be lost.

In verse 8cd of the colophon, Pītāmbara names his textual sources for the study of *alaṃkāraśāstra*. The concerned list is, yet again, somewhat curious in that it contains four separate elements: (1) the *Kāvyaaprakāśa*, (2) the *Kāvyaadarśa*, (3) the [*Sarasvatī*]*kaṇṭhābharāṇa* and (4) the work by Daṇḍin. While items (1) and (3) are rather unambiguous in referring to the celebrated works by Maṃmaṭa and Bhojadeva respectively, the latter being Pītāmbara's main source of poetological quotations, the remaining items (2) and (4) require further interpretation. In my current understanding, I consider the second item, i.e. the *Kāvyaadarśa*, to refer to Vāmana's *Kāvyaālaṃkārasūtra*. For arriving at this interpretation, I rely on the evidence of two commentaries on the *Amarakośa* (i.e. Amarasimha's *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*), namely, the *Ṭikāsarvasva* of Vandyaghaṭīya Sarvānanda (composed in 1159/60 CE; Vogel 2013, [28]) and the *Amarakośapañjikā* or *Padacandrikā* of Bṛhaspati Miśra alias Rāyamukuṭa (composed in 1431/32 in Bengal; Vogel 2013, [30]). When arguing for the grammatical correctness of the formation *durgandha* (in *Amarakośa* 1.5.12a), both commentaries quote Vāmana's *Kāvyaālaṃkārasūtra* 5.2.65. Both printed editions of these texts report,⁷¹ however,

⁷⁰ See Klebanov 2016, 73–75.

⁷¹ For the relevant passage in the *Ṭikāsarvasva* see Gaṇapati Śāstrī 1914, 108; for the *Padacandrikā* see Dutta Sastri 1966, 182.

that all (or, at least, some MSS) identify the source of this quotation as the *Kāvyaḍarśa*. While both the editors supposed this reading to reflect a simple scribal error, it seems likely that at a certain point in time Vāmana's text circulated under exactly this title. Given Pītāmbara's close connection to Rāyamukūṭa in time and place of scholarly activity, it appears reasonable to argue that they both could have followed the same tradition of naming Vāmana's composition *Kāvyaḍarśa*.

Should the above proposed theory be accepted, the above list of poetological works utilised by Pītāmbara could be reconstructed as follows: (1) Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaṣṭhānandā*, (2) Vāmana's *Kāvyaḍarśa*, (3) Bhoja's *Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa* and (4) Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa*.

Verse 9 of the colophon supplies a list of grammatical works utilised by Pītāmbara. These are (in order of listing): the *Kāśikā*[vṛtti], the *Upasargavṛtti*, the *Nyāsa*, the *Durghaṭa*[vṛtti], the *Jñāpaka*[], the *Paribhāṣā*[vṛtti], the *Bhāṣāvṛtti* as well as a commentary (*pañjikā*) on the *Bhāṣāvṛtti*, likely the *Bhāṣāvṛttivivaraṇapañjikā* of Viśvarūpa.⁷² This list has a special significance because, among other things, it indicates the author's exceptional acquaintance with the so-called Bengali grammatical tradition and, in this way, furnishes a rather strong argument for Pītāmbara's close connection with the region. Along with a number of other criteria, Wieleńska-Soltwedel 2010 convincingly established a list of works, a certain canon of what may be called the Bengali grammatical tradition, with regard to which she says:

[W]hen a particular commentary frequently cites writers belonging to the Bengali tradition or coming from Bengal, but only seldom those who stem from other parts of India, this clearly shows that the author of this work was acquainted with or even influenced by the Bengali tradition. Similarly, when the same commentary is often cited by the Bengali grammarians, especially if it is almost ignored by authors associated with other parts of India, this would speak for including this work in the Bengali tradition.⁷³

For the writings prior to the beginning of the sixteenth century, this canon consists of the following items: the *Kāśikāvṛtti* by Jayāditya and Vāmana, the *Nyāsa*, Jinendrabuddhi's commentary on the *Kāśikā* and the most significant text for the Bengali school, the lost *Bhāṣāvṛtti* and the Anunyaśa,

⁷² Other known commentaries on the *Bhāṣāvṛtti* are the *Bhāṣāvṛttiyarthavivṛti* by Śṛṣṭidhara, the *Phakkikāvṛtti* by Sanātana Tarkācārya as well as the *Tattvārthasamḍipānī* by Saṣṭhīdāsa Miśrācārya (see Wieleńska-Soltwedel 2006).

⁷³ Wieleńska-Soltwedel 2010, 72ff.

both of a disputed authorship, works of Maitreyarākṣita, Govardhana (no work of this writer is extant) and Puruṣottamadeva, as well as the *Durghaṭavṛtti* of Śaraṇadeva, the *Bṛhatparibhāṣāvṛtti* of Śiradeva and the *Uṇādivṛtti* of Ujjvaladatta (Wielńska-Soltwedel 2006, 73–78).

We can see that Pītāmbara's list largely corresponds to the one established by Wielńska-Soltwedel 2010 as indicative for a Bengali origin of an author. Puruṣottamadeva's works are represented not only by his *magnum opus*, the *Bhāṣāvṛtti* along with its commentary, but also by several less known works. The *Upasargavṛtti* (*upasargasya vṛtti*) in Pītāmbara's list, for example, likely refers to an otherwise unknown work by Puruṣottamadeva, as it is explicitly mentioned in the *Candrikā* on Kirāṅ 8.20 (*ity upasargavṛttau puruṣottamaḥ*). The items *Jñāpaka* and *Paribhāṣā* are somewhat ambiguous, as I have not yet identified any quotations from these works in the running text of the *Candrikā*. The first term, however, likely refers to Puruṣottama's *Jñāpakasamuccaya*, while the latter could refer either to the *Paribhāṣāvṛtti* of the same author, or to Śiradeva's *Bṛhatparibhāṣāvṛtti*. The item *Durghaṭa* is likely to refer to Śaraṇadeva's work, as we find a lengthy quotation from this text in the commentary to Kirāṅ 17.63 cited as *durghaṭe 'pi [...]* *iti*.

Further significant for the above argument is Pītāmbara's acquaintance with another seminal actor of Bengali grammatical tradition, Maitreyarākṣita, whose works remained virtually unnoticed outside of Bengal (Wielńska-Soltwedel 2006, vol. 2, 33). Among other things, we find a direct quotation from one of the grammarian's works (presumably, an excerpt from the *Tantrapradīpa* on A 3.2.13, which has not been recovered so far) in the commentary on KĀ 1.10. This quote is, however, repeated verbatim from Harikaṇṭha's *Sārāvali* and, therefore, has no independent value for the current argument. Klebanov 2016, 85ff. demonstrated, however, that in the *Candrikā* on Kirāṅ 1.10 and 9.38, Pītāmbara has most likely drawn upon (and misinterpreted) a passage from Maitreyarākṣita's *Dhātupradīpa*, thus providing independent evidence for Pītāmbara's acquaintance with the author's *oeuvre*.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of the four commentaries on the *Kirātārjunīya* offers valuable insights into the formation of a distinct textual tradition, shaped by regional influences and scholarly exchange. The *Pañjikā* by Suvarṇarekha likely represents an ancient Sanskrit commentary on a work of *belles lettres*, with its upper temporal limit established by its mention in Śaraṇade-

va's twelfth-century *Durghaṭavṛtti*. This reference, along with the appearance of Suvarṇarekha's verses in early Bengali poetic anthologies, suggests the circulation of the *Pañjikā* in Bengal. Despite its antiquity, Suvarṇarekha's concise style, often condensing interpretations of entire chapters of the *Kirātārjunīya* into a single folio, may have contributed to its obscurity in classical scholarship.

However, evidence suggests that Suvarṇarekha's work was accessible to the Bengali scholar Harikaṇṭha, also known as Śubhakaṇṭha, who relied upon it for the composition of his own *Sārāvalī*. The latter text, too, seems to have remained within the Bengal region, where it was studied by the sixteenth-century scholar Pītāmbara alias Hāritāmra Pītāmbara, the author of another commentary on the *Kirātārjunīya* titled *Candrikā* (or *Kirātacandrikā*) as well as at least one more exegetical work, the *Durgāsaṃdehabhedikā* on the *Devīmāhātmya*. Pītāmbara's work eventually made its way to Nepal, where it served as a source for Ṭaṇa's *Subodhaṭikā*.

The existence of multiple manuscripts of the *Subodhaṭikā* suggests that this later iteration of Suvarṇarekha's initial exegesis gained some traction among Nepalese scholars. This trajectory of transmission and adaptation underscores the dynamic nature of Sanskrit scholarship, where texts and interpretations are exchanged across regions and generations, contributing to the ongoing evolution of literary analysis and understanding.

Furthermore, the above examination of the textual sources employed by Suvarṇarekha and Pītāmbara not only illuminates their regional affiliations but also provides a rare glimpse into the scholarly methods and extensive learning involved in the composition of commentaries on literary works.

These commentaries, often overlooked as mere glosses on the original text, reveal profound knowledge and intellectual engagement. Delving into the diverse array of texts consulted by Suvarṇarekha and Pītāmbara, ranging from ancient lexicographical works to grammatical treatises, underscores the complexity of the commentator's task.

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Real places imagined: On the historical value of Tamil *Talapurāṇams*

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Introduction

Many of the sacred sites in South India have a pre-modern textual record that describes their localised traditions, usually categorised as *sthalamā-bātmya*, *kṣetra-mābātmya*, or *sthala-purāṇa*.¹ These texts provide an account of the myths associated with the relevant sacred site, explaining the origins of its sacredness, the mythical (and sometimes semi-historical) construction of the temple with its various shrines and bathing spots, the site's unique rituals, and how its local mythology and rituals are connected to broader, trans-local mythology and ritual practices.²

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¹ The term 'pre-modern' is used here in a broad sense, as a term for the diverse historical periods before the onset of modernity, encompassing the diverse phases of South Asian history that precede British colonial dominance.

² Often, they describe more than a single temple, as the sacred site is sometimes a large territory that accommodates several temples (e.g. *Kāncipurāṇa* or *Paḷaṇittalapurāṇam*).

Sthalamāhātmya texts composed in Sanskrit can hardly be considered works of poetry—they present a straightforward narration, mostly in a simple *śloka* (i.e. *anuṣṭubh*) meter, and in an unadorned style, similar to that of the trans-local *mahāpurāṇas*. Tamil *talapurāṇams* are a variation of the same phenomenon.³ Composing them was a popular literary trend between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, which produced hundreds of works of this genre. Tamil *talapurāṇams* provide the same information as the Sanskrit *māhātmyas*—they narrate the same stories, and usually claim to be translations of earlier Sanskrit works.⁴ Nevertheless, they differ from their Sanskrit counterparts in terms of style: the *talapurāṇam* is a genre of highly stylised Tamil poetry, featuring a poetic register and a variety of meters, in addition to phonetic ornamentation and complex imagery that relies both on Sanskrit and Tamil literary traditions.

On top of the stylistic distinctions, there are two main formal features of the Tamil *talapurāṇams* that set them further apart from other forms of temple legends. One is the *pāyiram*, that is, the author’s ‘discursive preface’ (Ebeling 2020, 154). This is a feature of most Tamil works of this period, poetical and non-poetical alike. The *pāyiram* is a statement by the poet regarding his work. It includes benedictive verses that can reflect the author’s doctrinal positions, but often also verses on the time and place of the work’s composition, on the identity of the author and his teachers (or lineage—*paramparā*), and on the sources used by the author when composing the text.⁵

The second distinctive feature of Tamil *talapurāṇams*, is what I have elsewhere termed ‘lyrical preludes’ (Peres 2024). A lyrical prelude is a

³ *Talapurāṇam* is the Tamil cognate of Skt. *sthalapurāṇa*. For a recent study of the *talapurāṇam* genre in comparison to its Sanskrit counterpart, see Buchholz 2023.

⁴ In most cases, Tamil *talapurāṇams* are described by their authors as Tamil renderings of earlier Sanskrit texts. While this may seem like a mere poetic convention, the sources of Tamil Purāṇas can often be traced to Sanskrit *māhātmyas*, sometimes drawing from more than one source text. Thus, the process of composing *talapurāṇams* appears to have involved, at least in part, scholarly investigation and translation from Sanskrit sources.

⁵ This is a significant departure from the Sanskrit *māhātmyas*, which are never claimed to be the works of any historical author but are rather described as the words of God transmitted by a succession of mythological narrators. The authors of the Tamil *talapurāṇams* do not ignore the mythological succession—they usually emphasise the divine origin and the mythical chain of transmission, and place themselves at the end of the chain, as those who took on themselves the task of rendering their predecessors’ words in Tamil.

portion of the text that, in most cases, precedes the Purāṇa's frame narrative, and provides a poetic description of the surroundings of the sacred site eulogised in the text. Although lyrical preludes have some recurrent patterns, they were never formalised by traditional poeticians. Thus, different *talapurāṇams* have lyrical preludes of varying lengths and different points of emphasis.⁶

In the context of the current volume, these two features of Tamil *talapurāṇams* are particularly productive. The *pāyiram* ('preface') is clearly useful in contextualising the works and their authors. The lyrical preludes have additional potential (although less explicit), due to being a distinguishably individual contribution of the authors to their works: the lyrical prelude is an integral part of the *talapurāṇam*—it begins only after the *pāyiram* ends, and it is intertwined with the work's subject matter. At the same time, while the main part of a *talapurāṇam* (i.e. the narration of the mythological accounts) is usually based on earlier texts or other existing traditions, the lyrical prelude is the author's own addition. Moreover, in the lyrical prelude, *talapurāṇam* authors usually do not use an embedded narrator (unlike the rest of the work).⁷ Thus, the lyrical prelude provides *talapurāṇam* authors an opportunity to speak in their own voice and express more freely their own priorities.⁸ And since no effort is made to situate these descriptions in the distant past, the lyrical preludes can be considered a reflection of their authors' own time and place.

⁶ Moreover, although lyrical preludes can be considered typical of *talapurāṇams*, they are not a formal requirement. My estimation is that about thirty-five to forty per cent of Tamil *talapurāṇams* do not have lyrical preludes at all. In addition, since the genre prioritises the location (*sthala/talam*) over its monuments/constructions, a lyrical prelude does not necessarily include a *town section*, for there is not always one specific town, nor one specific temple. Nevertheless, the *land* and *town* sections are the most typical divisions of this literary phenomenon.

⁷ The use of an embedded narrator is the standard feature in all *purāṇas*, as well as in the epics, both in Sanskrit and in Tamil. The audience's common position is eaves-dropping on a conversation between characters within the telling. This conversation conventionally forms the text's frame narrative. In the purāṇic context, it is usually a renowned sage (such as Śuka or Sanatkumāra) who narrates some past events to the group of sages who are in the midst of performing a sacrifice in the Naimiṣa forest. In some Tamil *talapurāṇams*, the lyrical prelude appears only after the introduction of the frame narrative. In these cases, there is more ambiguity regarding the speaker's 'voice.'

⁸ While the lyrical prelude is not the *only* site for assessing the Tamil author's own contribution to the text, it is the most reliable place to look for it.

The structure of the lyrical preludes

A standard feature of *talapurāṇams*' lyrical preludes is that their descriptions travel from the periphery to the center, in a kind of 'zoom-in' motion, beginning with the country's landscape, through the town and its streets, and concluding with the innermost part of the relevant site, that is, the main temple's *garbhagrha*. This progression is usually divided into two sections (or chapters)—one on the land (*nāṭu*) and one on the town (*nakaram*),⁹ which marks also a division in the general aesthetic tendencies: The *land sections* are composed in a form and style that rely more heavily on poetical conventions from both the Tamil and Sanskrit literary traditions.¹⁰ The scenery they depict is, for the most part, not the actual geographical landscape of the relevant sacred site, but an imaginary landscape, designed to evoke the learned audience's literary knowledge and pleasure. The *town sections* are different. First, they are more linear in their progression: the poem's 'journey' through the town starts from its outskirts (the fields, groves, water canals), then zooms in on specific quarters or streets, usually beginning with the commercial areas and the market, then moving to household scenes and descriptions of the residence streets, arranged according to social affiliations. As the poem's progression approaches the temple compound, we usually find descriptions of related institutions such as learning halls (*kalvi-cālai*), feeding halls (*aṇṇa-cālai*), and the *śaiva* monasteries (*maṭam*).¹¹ The *town section* usually ends with a description of the temple

⁹ As mentioned above the lyrical preludes were never formalised or theoreticised. During the time in which the *talapurāṇam* genre was gaining popularity, that is, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was more variance in the structure of their lyrical preludes. In *talapurāṇams* from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we find a more fixed structure, in the general form of what I describe here. The examples given in this article are taken from a lyrical prelude that is congruent with the presented structure.

¹⁰ For example, using the conventional system *tiṇai* of the Tamil *akam* poetry, and long verse clusters with the Sanskrit poetical *alaṅkāra* called *virodhābhāsa* (see Peres 2024, 113–116). The influence of Sanskrit *kāvya* literature on the style and imagery of Tamil *talapurāṇams* extends beyond the use of Sanskrit *alaṅkāras*, incorporating various motifs and conventions typical of Sanskrit literature. However, a comprehensive comparative study of Sanskrit *kāvya*'s impact on Tamil poetry from this period has yet to be conducted.

¹¹ It is important to note that Tamil *talapurāṇams* are an essentially *śaiva* literary phenomenon. This is evident from the scant number of extant pre-modern non-*śaiva talapurāṇams*, compared to several hundreds of extant *śaiva* works (see the surveys of *talapurāṇam* literature in Kuruṣācāmi 1974 and Mātavan 1995).

and the people who worship God there, culminating with a verse about the main deity himself. The descriptions in the *town sections* incorporate stereotypical, conventional representations—of housewives and courtesans, ascetics and brahmins, as well as markets, feeding halls, monasteries, and the like. These tropes draw much of the attention and occupy most of the space in each verse.¹² Yet each verse is also linked to an actual place, institution, community, or practice. The logic is clear: when the audience hears this description, they are not yet eavesdropping on some mythological conversation (e.g. Sūta narrating the local mythology to the sages of Naimiṣa forest)—this part of the telling has not started yet. Rather, as we said above, they are still listening to the author speaking in first person. While the *land section* anchors the text in the poetical realm through its imagery, as the poem's progression moves closer and closer to the temple—the very location where the audience is situated¹³—the verses are designed to evoke not only aesthetic pleasure, but also some recognition of the place. The *town sections* are thus a meeting point between the poetical depiction of the town and the local audience's actual experience of walking through the town's streets and into the temple. This aspect of the lyrical preludes—that is, its engagement

¹² In themselves, the descriptions of cities and towns in Tamil *talapurāṇams* represent a continuation, rather than an innovation, in Indian literary tradition. Such urban portrayals have deep roots in both Sanskrit and Tamil literature. In Sanskrit, city descriptions appeared as early as Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* and were later codified by the eighth-century poetician Daṇḍin, who established them as an essential element of *mahākāvya* in his *Kāvyaadarśa* ('The Mirror of Literature'). The Tamil literary tradition likewise embraced this convention, as seen in early epics such as Iḷaṅko Aṭṭikal's *Cilappatikāram*, with its portrayals of Pukal and Maturai. While *town sections* of *talapurāṇams* often echo the urban imagery of earlier Sanskrit and Tamil works, they have several distinctive formal features: their concentric structure, which zooms in on the temple; their placement as separate chapters preceding the mythological narrative; and, where applicable, their position before the frame narrative. These features draw from a rich Tamil literary lineage, having precedents in earlier works such as *Cuḷamaṇi*, *Irāmāvatāram*, and *Tiruttoṇṭarapurāṇam*. For a detailed analysis of the sources and inspirations of lyrical preludes in Tamil *talapurāṇams*, see Peres 2024, 110–113. For a discussion of urban imagery in Sanskrit *kāvya*, see Kaul 2011.

¹³ The first performance (*araṇkeram*) of a *talapurāṇam*—and presumably the following performances, too—used to take place in the temple to which the work was dedicated. Some lively accounts on such *araṇkerams* are found in U. Ve. Cāminātāyar's biography of Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, mentioned in Sacha Ebeling's *Colonizing the Realm of Words* (Ebeling 2010, 76–79).

with the time and place of the poem's composition through the town description—has the potential of accommodating valuable historical information that is neglected in texts of other genres. To demonstrate this argument, I examine below one case study from the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, a sixteenth-century *talapurāṇam* on Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, which provides, in its lyrical prelude, historical information on the community of performing artists that were affiliated with the Aruṇācaleśvara temple.

The elusive histories of Tamil temple musicians and dancers

Music and dance have been an inseparable part of the routine ritual practice in Tamil temples in pre-modern times, at least from the rise of the 'bhakti movement' (Tallotte 2023, 58). The musicians and dancers who participated in temple rituals were often professionals affiliated with a specific temple, and their practice was passed down hereditarily. However, the pre-modern social history of their communities remains largely obscure. One reason for this is their relative absence (particularly the musicians' absence) from temple inscriptions and from ritual guides and manuals (*āgamas* and *paddhatis*), which are the two main types of textual resources that recorded pre-modern temple history and practices. Inscriptions mainly record official events, transactions, and endowments. The ritual guides are focused on the details of ritual practices and on the central agents who perform them. The musicians and dancers usually do not get more than a mere mention in these texts (Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 4, 104; Tallotte 2023, 59). Thus, the information on the presence and functions of temple performance artists in these resources is scarce, laconic, and hardly efficient in reconstructing the dynamic pre-modern history of their communities.¹⁴ At the same time, we also cannot comfortably rely on modern records on temple performers and their communities for reconstructing these pasts. This is largely the result of the early twentieth-century movement against *devadāsīs*, which grew out of the general disapproval of the nineteenth-century colonial government toward the *devadāsīs'* non-monogamous practices, eventually obtaining a legislative form in the 'Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act.' Before the beginning of the twentieth century, temple dancers

¹⁴ As Leslie Orr claims, there must have been constant competition between groups over the income and prestige that follow the ritual functions related to performative arts, and therefore we should assume the state of affairs of the performers' communities was never stable but rather of a highly dynamic nature (Orr 2000, 107).

and the menfolk of their communities (who served alongside them as drummers and dance teachers) were not a caste in themselves, nor did they come from one specific caste.¹⁵ The anti-*devadāsī* movement in Tamil Nadu brought to the ‘establishment’ of a new musician ‘caste’—*icai velāḷar*,¹⁶ in the 1920s. By taking the *icai-velāḷa* as their caste title, the men who formerly belonged to the *devadāsī* communities could dissociate themselves from the now-disrespected reputation of the temple dancers.¹⁷ As a result, even elaborate records based on rigorous fieldwork, such as Reiniche and Srinivasan’s work on the social arrangement of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 4), do not reflect a continuity of the pre-modern social reality, but only the modern state of affairs that followed the Devadasi Abolition Act, with only a few (inconsistent) testimonies of the earlier social divisions.¹⁸ In short, there are many blind spots regarding the social identity of pre-modern temple dancers and musicians. The case study presented below shows that pre-modern literary texts can help to fill in some of these gaps.

¹⁵ There were two main castes who dedicated their girls to be *devadāsīs* (left-hand *kaikkōḷar* and right-hand *velāḷar*). Since the *devadāsī*’s children were not born from official marriage relationships, they could not be defined in terms of caste. Moreover, most often their fathers were men of higher castes and not a part of the *kaikkōḷar* or *velāḷar*, and therefore the children could not have been considered a part of these two castes. See Thurston and Rangachari 1909, vol. 2, 127–128.

¹⁶ A note on transliteration: since this article has transliterations of both Sanskrit and Tamil words, I follow David Shulman’s Tamil transliteration scheme (Shulman 2016, xii), marking the short Tamil vowels *ē* and *ō* (which are distinctive to the Dravidian languages) and not marking the Sanskrit diphthongs and the long Tamil diphthongs.

¹⁷ Gover provides an account of this type of dissociation, in his description of the *devadāsīs*’ sons, which ‘[I]n modern times the English law has made a vast difference in their condition,’ since, if such a son takes the caste-title *mutaliyār* and is sent away from his birthplace to somewhere his antecedents are unknown, ‘[I]n his new position none can deny that he is a Vellala’ (Gover 1871, xvi). Amrit Srinivasan argues that the men of the *devadāsī* community, particularly the shawm players (who form nowadays the *pēriyamēḷam*, ‘big orchestra’), collaborated with the political forces that were pushing forward the legislation for the abolition of temple dancers, since they benefitted both from the vacuum in temple performance (by filling it themselves) and from gaining financial dominance and inheritance within their households (Srinivasan 1985, 1873–1874). On the ‘establishment’ of the *icai-velāḷa* caste, see also Soneji 2012, 143ff.

¹⁸ Moreover, according to Reiniche and Srinivasan’s work, the *pēriyamēḷam* musicians of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai had come from the Tanjore region 15–30 years earlier. They belonged to different castes, but most of them identified themselves as *icai-velāḷar* (Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 4, 107).

Temple performers in the Aruṇakirippurāṇam

Maṛaiṇāṇa Campantar (alias Nigamajñāna or Vedajñāna) was a prolific sixteenth-century Tamil poet and scholar, most known for his Tamil translation of the *Śivadharmottara* (*Civatarumottaram*). Among Maṛaiṇāṇa's many other Tamil works, which are mostly of doctrinal nature, there are also two *talapurāṇams*: the *Kamalālayaccirappu* (KĀC) on Tiruvārūr (composed c. 1546), and the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* (AKP) on Aruṇācalam/Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (c. 1553).¹⁹ The lyrical preludes of these two works are very similar to each other in their structure and arrangement. Moreover, Maṛaiṇāṇa often reuses tropes and themes from verses of his earlier work, the *Kamalālayaccirappu*, in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, to the degree of reiterating the same phrase. For our current purpose, this similarity is useful, as it enables us to identify points in which Maṛaiṇāṇa made an extra effort to distinguish Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (and its temple) from Tiruvārūr, with less concern that these divergences from generic descriptions are a stylistic choice.

One such point of divergence between the lyrical preludes is related to the *varṇa*-division of society in Maṛaiṇāṇa's descriptions. As a rule, *town sections* in *talapurāṇams* dedicate some verses to describe how each *varṇa*-community dwells in its designated streets or quarters in town. Maṛaiṇāṇa is not as elaborate as other *talapurāṇam* authors on this matter (and, generally speaking, his lyrical preludes are quite concise). In the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, he acknowledges the *varṇa*-division of the streets of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in a single verse, at the beginning of the *town section*:

To the east of that *Tiruvaṇṇāmalai* Hill,
 which the gods worship, thinking:
 'The miraculous hill is the earthly location of Śiva-puri!'
 there is a glorious town,
 in which live together, according to the traditional codes,
 those who have the Veda on their tongues (i.e. brahmins),
 the 'royals' (i.e. *kṣatriyas*), the *vaiśyas*, the *śūdras*,
 and the others.
 We shall [now] tell its greatness.²⁰

¹⁹ For an exhaustive survey of the works composed by this author (and his student-nephew, Nigamajñāna II), see: Ganesan 2009 and Trento 2021.

²⁰ AKP, *tirunakarac-cirappu*, 2:
pūvalayatt' ulav aḷavil civa puriy ul ituv ām arputa vērp' ēṇre
tevarkaḷuṇ tōḷuṇ intat tiruvaṇṇāmalaiṇ pūrva ticaiyiṇ veta

Who are these ‘others’ (*marraiyaṛ*)? The original audience will not have had a problem to figure out Maṛaiṇāṇa’s intention, since he has already mentioned them earlier, in the tenth verse of the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s *land section*:

The Aruṇai-country, on the bank of this beautiful holy river,
has [designated living areas] known as:
nattam, *akaram*, *pāṭi*, *nakar*, and *puram*,
that accommodate in the prescribed order
the people of the four ‘superior’ [classes]
brought forth by the lotus-born Brahma,
the *anulomar* and *piratilomar*,
who emerged from them,
and the *antarālikar* and *virāṭṭiyaṛ*,
who do not belong to the latter categories.²¹

This verse provides general names for town districts that are defined by their function or inhabitants. One possible interpretation for the district-division is that *nattam* is a non-brahmin residence area; *pāṭi* is a residence area for army people; *akaram* is *agrahāra*, that is, the brahmin residence streets that surround the temple; *nakar*, in this context, would be the trade area (market); and *puram*—the temple compound itself.²² Importantly for the current paper, this verse emphasises the presence of social groups that do not fall into the four-*varṇa* pattern, but which, nevertheless, are a part of the social fabric: *anulomar*, *piratilomar*, *antarālikar*, and *virāṭṭiyaṛ*. These four subdivisions are known from *dharmasāstra* texts. An *anuloma* (Tam. *anuloman*²³) is a person born to a father of higher *varṇa* and mother of lower *varṇa*; *pratiloma* (Tam. *piratiloman*) is a person born to a mother whose *varṇa* is higher than the father’s; an *antarālika* (Tam. *antarālikan* or

*nāviṇar maṇṇavar vaciyaṛ cūttiraru(m) marraiyaṛu(m) nayantu nīti
meviy uraiyum viyaṇ āṛ puriy ōṇṛ’ uṇṭ’ atan vaḷatttai viḷampalāme ||*

²¹ AKP, *tirunāṭṭuc-cirappu*, 10:

*it-takaiya tiru natiyīṇ karaiyīṇ pāl ilaṅku(m) malarōṇ rāṇ īṇrav
uttamar nālvarum avar pāl utittav anulomar oṭu piratilomar
at tiratt’ ōvvāv antarālikarum virāṭṭiyaṛum aṭaivir raṅku(m)
nattam akaram pāṭi nakar puram ēṇṛ’ iyampu pēyar aruṇai nāte ||*

²² This elegant reading was suggested by prof. K. Nachimuthu during a SHIVADHARMA Project group reading on this chapter in 2021.

²³ This is the singular form of the plural form *anulomar* that appears in the verse quoted above.

antarālāṇ) is a person born to an *anuloma* father and *pratiloma* mother, and *vrātya* (Tam. *virāṭṭiyaṇ*) is the title of the offspring in the reverse case (i.e. *pratiloma* father and *anuloma* mother). Thus, when Maṛaiñāṇa mentions four *varṇas* and ‘others’ later in the text, it is clear to the audience that these ‘others’ are the people of the mixed *varṇa*-origin. For some reason, this is an important feature of sixteenth-century Tirvaṇṇāmalai: in the *Kamalālaya-cirappu*’s lyrical prelude, for comparison, Maṛaiñāṇa refers to the *varṇa*-division only in the last verse of the *land section*, which summarises the greatness of the Coḷa land, saying it is a place in which people of the four *varṇas* and *aṇulomar* live together (but not mentioning any of the other sub-divisions).²⁴ In the *town section* that follows, he says nothing else about them.

Maṛaiñāṇa’s emphasis of the mixed-*varṇa* communities’ presence in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* may indicate that he had, when composing this text, a particular interest in these categorisations of *dhramaśāstra*-based social groups. And, indeed, he develops this theme further in one of the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s last chapters, where he presents a long exposition (which does not seem to appear in any of the potential Sanskrit sources)²⁵ on all possible combinations of *varṇas* and sub-*varṇas*, and their traditional oc-

²⁴ KĀC, *maṇṭala-valāc-carukkam*, 38:

In the wide Coḷa land crowd together
the people of the great, eternal Veda, the kings of eternal fame,
the merchants, the *śūdras*, and the *aṇulomar*,
who emerged from these four [*varṇas*] that are mentioned in the books—
Who can tell its greatness, other than, perhaps, [Ādiśeṣa,]
the eloquent king of Snakes, with his one thousand mouths?
maṇṇu(m) mā-maṛaiy-ālar cīr maṇu(m) maṇṇar vāṇikar cūttirar
ēṇṇu(m) nūl varum inta nālvar iṭatt’ ēḷumm aṇulomarum
tunṇi nīṭiya coḷa teca vaḷattīṇaic cōla vallar ār
paṇṇa vallavaṇ āyiram mukam uḷḷavaṇ paṇirācaṇe ||

²⁵ Maṛaiñāṇa declares in verse 26 of the *pāyiram* that his work is based on the Sanskrit accounts that appear in the *Sahasrakōṭirudrasaṃhitā* of the *Śivapurāṇa*. There is no such *saṃhitā* in the extant editions of the *Śivapurāṇa*, yet its name is mentioned at the beginning of the *vidyeśvarasaṃhitā*, as part of the original (and very large) construction of the text. The other Tamil *talapurāṇam* on Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, Ēlappa Nāvalar’s famous seventeenth-century *Aruṇācalappurāṇam*, is mostly based on the Sanskrit *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* that appears (in two variations) in the *Skandapurāṇa*, although the author claims to have based his work on the *Koṭirudrasaṃhitā* of the *Śivapurāṇa* and on accounts from the *Līṅgapurāṇa*. Thus, we may assume that there is some incongruence between modern and pre-modern titles of purāṇic texts. In any case, the two Tamil texts differ in structure and content.

cupations.²⁶ At the same time, his dwelling on this topic may also indicate that these divisions had particular significance in the social fabric of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai region. It is the latter argument that I would like to focus on, since there are further clues for this possibility. Most notable among them is the fact that one sub-group—the *pāracavar* (Skt. *pāraśava*)—is mentioned twice by its name in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s town section (i.e. in the description of sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai), and several more times later in the text.

The *pāracavar* seem to have been the professional musicians and dance-masters of early-modern Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.²⁷ They are mentioned by name for the first time as part of the description of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai's busy streets.²⁸ After a vivid description of the town's market, with the many female vendors calling out to advertise the goods they are selling, we come across the following three verses:

Everywhere are glittering stages on which [women]—
with pearl-like smiles and lotus-like faces,
with darting eyes and mounds²⁹ like swaying snakes—
perform dance-dramas in a manner that pleases the heart,
[following] the path prescribed in Bharata's treatise
that was uttered by the wise 'Revealer.'³⁰
In houses, everywhere,

²⁶ AKP, *valampuriccarukkam*, 98–132.

²⁷ 'Early modern' here refers to the transitional period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, during which the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* was composed.

²⁸ Maṛaiṇāṇa's description of the town of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai is structured in a standard manner and parallels the description of Tiruvārūr in the *Kamalālayaccirappu*. Praises of the groves and water tanks are followed by verses on the people's extensive generosity, the sounds of Vedic recitations, and the minor temples found around the town; there are descriptions of the harmonious lives of the town's married couples, of the gods' envy toward babies who are born here; descriptions of the young maidens' games, the lower-caste women's work-songs, the many feeding-halls of this town. All these themes appear in both the *Kamalālayaccirappu* and *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, and are phrased in a similar manner.

²⁹ That is, pubic mounds (Tam. *alkul*).

³⁰ AKP, *tirunakarac-cirappu*, 31:

mutt' anaiya muṇuvaliṇār muḷarimalar nikar mukattār
attiram pol ampakattār āṭ' aravatt' alkuliṇār
vittakan vetakan viḷampum parataṭ-iyal viti valīye
citta-makiḷu' ura naṭaṇ cey arañk' eṇkuṇ ciṇant' ilaṅkum ||

those who are called *pāracavar*—
 handsome like Kāma, with mountain-like shoulders
 and hair-tufts tied with *pālai*³¹—
 play cymbals and other instruments
 and worship the Lord of Aruṇa Hill,
 who lovingly ‘enslaves’ them.³²

Full of expanding beauty are the houses of the *rudraṅnikās*, who,
 having become initiated when, in the presence of Śiva,
 the staff in the preceptor’s hand touched their heads,
 smear themselves daily with fragrant ash,
 wear *rudrākṣa* necklaces, grind turmeric for protection,³³
 place the Lord’s pair of holy feet on their heads,
 and, having cut away their inner faults, shine.³⁴

This cluster of three verses is concerned with the communities of performance artists. The dancing girls are described first. They perform on stages ‘everywhere’ around this part of town. They are not ‘simple’ dancers—their performance is based on a learned tradition, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the origin of which goes back to Śiva himself.³⁵

³¹ According to the Tamil Lexicon, *pālai* is the spathe of a palm tree flower.

³² AKP, *tirunakara-cirappu*, 32:

veḷ aṇaiyav ēḷil uṭaiyār vērp’ aṇaiya mar puyattār
pālai puṇai kuñciyiṇār pāracavar eṇum pēyarār
tāla mutar karuviyiṇait tā(m) muḷakkit tamaṇṇi aṇpāl
āl aruṇa kiriyāṇaiy aṭipāṇivār akam eṇkum ||

To ‘enslave’ in the *śaiva* context can mean to accept as a devotee, but also—to win their hearts. In the current case, we have an expression of mutual affection, as the drummers worship God (by their music) and He makes them ‘his.’

³³ The act of grinding turmeric may hint at the rite of waving a plate with ‘protective’ substances in front of the deity to ward off the evil eye, which used to be performed along with the lamp-waving rite in Tamil temples by *devadāsīs* (Kersenboom 1991, 135). Wearing *rudrākṣa* beads is unusual for women, yet this practice among *devadāsīs* during festivals is documented (Kersenboom 1987, 114).

³⁴ AKP, *tirunakara-cirappu*, 33:

tecikan kait tēṇṭu civaṇ rirumunne tan talai mer rīṇṭap pēṇṇe
vācam uru(m) nīr’ aṇintu kaṇṭi vaṭam pūṇṭ’ araittu maṇcaṭ kāppum
īcaṇ iṇait tiruv aṭiyai nā(l) ṭōrun taṇ cirattiṇ entit tamm uṭ
kācu kaṭint’ ilaṇkum uruttira-kaṇikaimār maṇaiyūṇ kavīṇ āṇṇ’ oṇkum ||

³⁵ Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* is usually considered to have been taught to him by Brahma. Nevertheless, we may assume that here the term *vittakan vetakan* (translated above

Let us now look at the parallel verses from the *Kamalālayaccirappu*. Here, too, we find three verses dedicated to the performance artists:

Women—

with heavy earrings, slender waists, and speech sweet like sugarcane,
with curved, bow-like eyebrows that show scorn,
mashing the hearts of anyone who sees them,
with mouths [like] red coral,
[holding] water jugs that cannot equal [the size of] their unwilting breasts,
with hearts that never give in to their wishing-tree-like suitors,
and with a gait [so lovely it] humiliates even geese—
dance on stages, everywhere.³⁶

The beauties with mouths [like] the petals of red cotton tree[-flowers],
with ‘shrinking’ waists, the gait of a female elephant,
and perfect skill in sweet-talking,
with the gracefulness of a peacock, heavy earrings,
and eyes that crush hearts,
who, having acquired knowledge of all the many arts,
perform dance in the style of the *Bharatam* [tradition],
show themselves before the Supreme One,
and, at the auspicious day, bear the preceptor[’s staff]
on their heads—

Their residences are found everywhere.³⁷

as ‘the wise revealer’) actually refers to Śiva (who, being the lord of the dance is much related to this art), since Maṛaiṇāṇa, in his (2.21), uses an almost identical term (*vittan vetakan*) to refer to Śiva.

³⁶ KĀC, *tiruvārūrc-cirappuc-carukkam*, 22:

*kaṇaṅkulaiyār nuṇṇ itaiyār karump’ aṇaiya mōliyaṇaiyār kaṇṭār taṅkaṇ
maṇaṅ kulaiya nakai cēyyuṇ vaciv’ illār cēmpavaḷa vāyār vātāt
taṇan taṇaiyūṇ kumpam ōvā taruv aṇaiya kāṇṭaṇaiyūṇ tamakkey uḷḷār
aṇantaṇaiyūṇ paḷitta naṭaiy arivaiyarkaḷ naṭam payilum araṅkum ēṅkum ||*

³⁷ KĀC, *tiruvārūrc-cirappuc-carukkam*, 23:

*ilav itaḷ vāy ilaiyār ituk’ itaiyār piṭinaṭaiyār in cō(l) nallār
kalava mayir cāyalinār kaṇaṅkulaiyār maṇaṅ kulaiṅkum kaṇṇār karṇuṇ
pala kalaṇaiyūṇ paratattin paṭi payilvār naṭam paramaṇ muṇṇe tonṇum
talaiyūṇ urat tecika(n) nā(l) tarippārkaḷ vāl maṇaiyūṇ taṅkum ēṅkum ||*

The printed edition of the *Kamalālayaccirappu* includes only the last line of this verse in the body of the text, the first three lines are given in the edition’s appendix, based on manuscripts from Maharaja Serfoji’s Sarasvati Mahal Library, in Tanjavur.

When these gold-like women,
 with their golden bracelets, lethal gazes, and flower-covered hair,
 with their slim waists, white smiles, and red mouths,
 dance, according to the *Bharatam* tradition,
 the eyes of the brahmins, who perceive it full-heartedly, never blink.
 Hence, [people] say:
 ‘Śiva’s Tiruvārūr is [just like] the gleaming heavenly world
 where the Immaculate, Unblinking [Celestials] roam!’³⁸

The two verse-clusters given above have much in common. In both texts, the respective cluster is ‘situated’ in the temple’s periphery, adjacent to the verses on the monastery (*maṭam*) and on the temple servants (*aṭiyar*). The tradition which the dancers follow is in both cases the *bharatam* (‘Tam. *paratam*’), that is, *nāṭyaśāstra* tradition of dance theatre. In addition, both texts present two types of dancing contexts: one is on ‘secular’ stages, the other—in front of God. The latter context is further distinguished by the mention of the dancers’ initiation ceremony, by the touch of the preceptor’s staff on their heads.³⁹ At the same time, there are also notable differences. The emphasis of the *Kamalālayaccirappu*’s verses is more erotic: the verses linger over the dancers’ beauty and temperament that enchants their audience and suitors. In the *Arunakirippurāṇam*, on the other hand, the focus is more on the professional and religious aspects of their performance. Each of the verses, including the first one, on non-temple performance, emphasises the performers’ relation to God. The initiated dancers are defined as *rudraganikās* (‘Rudra’s courtesans,’ i.e. *devadāsīs*), and they are described only through the process of their initiation and their devotional and ritual practices. And then there are the musicians, ‘sandwiched’ between the two verses on the dancers (perhaps distinguishing two aspects of traditional

³⁸ KĀC, *tiruvārūrc-cirappuc-carukkam*, 24:

pōr rōṭiyār pūṇmulaiyār por viṭiyār alar kuḷalār pōṇṇey aṇṇār
cirṇ’ iṭaiyār vēṇṇakaiyār cēvvāyār parataviti cēyyum āṭal
parri maṇam urap pārppār kaṇkaḷ imaiyāmaiyaṇār paramaṇ ārūr
kurram ilāv imaiyorkaḷ kuḷaviya vāṇ ulakam ēṇak kūruvāre ||

In the printed edition, the third line has *pātaviti*, which I amended in the text above to *parataviti*. The latter is more likely to be correct when comparing this text to the *Arunakirippurāṇam*, and Maṇaiṇā’s frequent use of the expression *parataviti*.

³⁹ This rite (in which the guru touches the dancer’s head with a staff in front of the deity) seems to mirror the injunctions for the *devadāsīs*’ initiation in the *Dikṣādarśa*, a doctrinal text in Sanskrit composed by Maṇaiṇā’s nephew and student, Nigamajñāna II (Ganesan 2009, 34n207).

dance), who are not mentioned at all in the *Kamalālayacciṟappu*. That is not to say that music is not a part of the *Kamalālayacciṟappu*'s town section—music and musical instruments (twenty-one of them, to be precise) are mentioned earlier in this section.⁴⁰ In addition, one verse says that in Tiruvārūr one can witness women singing and dancing in the streets,⁴¹ yet these are not presented as learned or ritualised traditions of song and dance, but rather such that belong to domestic contexts (like weddings, etc.).⁴² The location of the verses quoted above, in both texts, suggests that the performing arts they describe are specifically related to the temple, and to performers' communities who reside in its proximity. And still, only the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* mentions the musicians.

Maṛaiñāṇa does not say much about the musicians—as one may expect, they are described as good looking and very devoted to Śiva.⁴³ The unusual thing about this verse is that it highlights their social category: *pāraśava* (Tam. *pāraccavar*). A *pāraśava* is defined, from the early *dharmaśāstra* texts, as the son of a brahmin father and *śūdra* mother,⁴⁴ and thus it is a sub-category of the *anuloma* mentioned earlier. Had it been the only mention of the *pāraśava* category, we could have taken it as a poetic choice, which, perhaps, was made in order to solve some phonetic or prosodic difficulty. However, this term appears several more times in the text, one of them within the town section itself.

After the verses given above, the poet describes the monasteries adjacent to the temple, and then comes to the description of the temple. First, the structure—the walls, towers, water tanks, and storage rooms for texts (*paṇṭāram*). Next, he describes the worship that takes place in the temple: the rituals of the *ādiśaivas*,⁴⁵ the rituals of the *vaidikas*, and the singing of the Tamil *Tevāram* hymns.⁴⁶ Then, at the climax of this journey—that is, at the very end of the town section—we meet the *pāraccavar* again:

⁴⁰ For example, KĀC, *tiruvārūrc-ṇṇappuc-carukkam*, 15.

⁴¹ KĀC, *tiruvārūrc-ṇṇappuc-carukkam*, 12.

⁴² In addition, these verses have parallels in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* (*tirunakarak-ṇṇappu*, 11–12, 15).

⁴³ They also habitually tie their hair with *pālai* (see fn. 26).

⁴⁴ See, for example, *Mānavadharmasāstra* 10.8; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.91.

⁴⁵ They are called here *potaka* (Skt. *bodhaka*), AKP, *tirunakarak-ṇṇappu*, 46.

⁴⁶ AKP, *tirunakarak-ṇṇappu*, 46–47.

The *pāracavar*,
 who have the sacred ash on their foreheads and the Aruṇa Hill on their minds,
 who have mastered all arts, beginning with *Bharatam*,
 keeping the rhythm with their palms,⁴⁷
 guide in dance the beautiful, golden-braceleted women,
 while sounding sweet melodies to the incomparable God.⁴⁸

This verse is followed by three more verses on the dance performance itself:

Resembling *tuṭi* drums and female elephants—with their withering waists and gait,
 resembling poison and nectar—with their eyes and speech,
 resembling bowstrings with their bellies and mountains with their breasts—
 the young women dance in God’s divine presence.⁴⁹

Resembling a doe with their eyes and the moon with their faces,
 resembling honey with their voices, and Lakṣmī with their form,
 the women sing: *tāṇataṇā, tāṇataṇā*
 in front of the shrine of the five-faced—and fifteen-eyed—God.⁵⁰

Resembling music with their speech and bamboo with their beautifully adorned arms,
 resembling *kayal* fish with their eyes and coral with their charming mouths,
 resembling the cool moon with their faces—
 the maidens dance in the gracious, divine presence
 of the God with the fiery forehead-eye.⁵¹

⁴⁷ This can also convey the meaning of ‘having all the melodies at their fingertips.’

⁴⁸ AKP, *tirunakaras-cirappu*, 49:

*nēṇṇi(i)l) nīṇṇiṇaiy uṭaiyār arunakiri niṇaiy’ uṭaiyār
 karṇ’ uṇarntu parata mutar kalai tāṇāṇ karatalattir
 parri naṭam payil vippār pāracavar pāṇk’ uṭaiya
 pōr rōṭiyār tamaṇ pōruv’ il potakaṇ iṇṇ icai pukaṇre ||*

⁴⁹ AKP, *tirunakaras-cirappu*, 50:

*tuṭiy anaiyār piṭiy anaiyār tuvaḷ iṭaiyāl aṭi naṭaiyāl
 viṭam anaiyār amut’ anaiyār viḷiy ataṇāṇ mōḷiy ataṇāl
 vaṭam anaiyār vayir’ ataṇāṇ malaiy anaiyār mulaiy ataṇāl
 aṭikalatu tirumuṇṇe naṭam puriyum arivaiyare ||*

⁵⁰ AKP, *tirunakaras-cirappu*, 51:

*māṇ anaiyār viḷiy inaiyāṇ matiy anaiyār mukam ataṇār
 reṇ anaiyār mōḷi ataṇār riruv anaiyār uruv’ ataṇāl
 āṇaṇaṇkaḷ aintu viḷiy aim mūṇṇon canniti muṇ
 rāṇataṇā tāṇataṇāv ēṇap pāṭun taiyalare ||*

⁵¹ AKP, *tirunakaras-cirappu*, 52:

One final verse follows, which concludes the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s lyrical prelude, praising the form of Śiva as the Aruṇa Hill. Thus, the final chord in the journey that began with the general descriptions of the land, town, and temple, is a dance performance in front of Śiva, orchestrated by the musicians who are, again, marked by their social category—*pāracavar*. The *pāracavar* are described here with an additional function: they not only accompany the dance with music, but also serve as dance-masters, having gained expertise in all the arts.

Apart from the general verses on the *varṇas* and some mentions of brahmins, *pāracavar* is the only social category mentioned by name in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s lyrical prelude. This, along with their appearance at the chapter's climax, points to the centrality (or, perhaps, peculiarity) that the *pāracavar* had in the eyes of Maṛaiṇāṇa. This impression is further enhanced by the fact that the *Kamalālayacciṟappu*'s lyrical prelude, despite its close structural and thematic resemblance to the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s, has no verses parallel to these. Moreover, this is not the last time that the *pāracavar* appear in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*.

As I mentioned above, toward the end of the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, Maṛaiṇāṇa provides a detailed account of the names and social functions of the offspring of each possible combination of *varṇa* categories and sub-categories. This exposition is included in a chapter on the practice of circumambulating the holy Aruṇācala ('Aruṇa Hill'). Maṛaiṇāṇa takes this chapter, which has a parallel in the Sanskrit *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* (and in the seventeenth-century Tamil *Aruṇācalappurāṇam* that follows it closely), as an opportunity to elaborate on some additional practical issues related to the local worship. Thus, after explaining the practice and benefit of the *gi-ri-pradakṣiṇā* ('circumambulation of the mountain'), he describes at length the practice of circumambulating the lingams in the temple itself. He defines the proximity to the main lingam which each devotee is allowed to reach during a *darśana*, according to their ritual function and social status/*varṇa*. He also describes the order of their temple worship, and eventually, as a kind of a long appendix to the chapter, the aforementioned exposition on the origin of every possible *varṇa* combination.

It is difficult to say whether Maṛaiṇāṇa's definitions of all the categories are descriptive or, perhaps (since they are introduced as part of the mytholog-

paṇṇ anaiyār mōliṭṭi atanār paṇaiy anaiyār aṇitolār
kaṇṇ inaiyār kayal anaiyār kavin vāyār ruvar anaiyār
taṇ matiyaṇ taṇaiy anaiyār tam mukattār rala(n) nēṛrik
kaṇṇaṇ aruṭ ṭirumuṇṇe niṇṇ' āṭuṇ kaṇṇiyare ||

ical account), should be considered hypothetical, or ideal. The reality of the details of worship in this chapter can be doubted on similar grounds. However, since the *pāracavar* are explicitly mentioned in the *town section*, their description is worth consideration as representing to some extent Maṛaiṇāṇa's contemporary reality. Their definition is given in the following verse:

When a man of the Veda mixes with a *śūdra* girl,
 having adorned her with a flower garland (i.e. having married her),
 The offspring is called *pāracavaṇ*.
 He is also considered to be [the person] called *uvaccaṇ*.
 He sometimes conducts the worship to the glorious Kālī,
 having become well-versed in the injunctions of the *Yāmaḷa[-tantra]*,
 and sometimes he guides the women's dance in front of the Great Lord,
 beating the splendid *mattaḷam* drum.⁵²

As noted above, this definition of the *pāracavar* should be treated with caution, as it could be an adaptation of a chapter from a *dharma* manual, which Maṛaiṇāṇa decided to include as a part of this work. Nevertheless, the identification of *pāracavaṇ* with the title *uvaccaṇ* is significant, since the latter is a known Tamil category of temple specialists: the word *uvaccaṇ* is derived from *uvaccu* or *uvaccal*, which is another name from the *mattaḷam* drum. The title *uvaccaṇ* points to the hereditary ritual function of this group. As we shall see below, in the twentieth century *uvaccaṇ* was considered a caste name. In *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, the name *uvaccaṇ* appears once more, in this very chapter, in the injunctions for the temple's circumambulation:

The temple girl, whose head was touched by the preceptor's staff,
 enters, bows, and dances in the [dance] hall.
 The *uvaccaṇ*, who has mastered the *Bharatam* [tradition]
 and has delivered these teachings,
 worships [God] and guides the *devadāsīs*'⁵³ dance in a pleasing manner
 in the dance hall.⁵⁴

⁵² AKP, *valampuric-carukkam*, 107:

cūttirar taṇ kaṇṇi taṇaiṇ curuṭi maṇaiyavaṇ alaraic cūṭṭit toya
vāyittavaṇ per pāracavaṇ avaṇ uvaccaṇ ēṇap pakarvar matitt' iṭuṇ kār
cirtti kaḷuṇ kālī taṇaiy aruccippāṇ yāmaḷattiṇ vitiyait ternṭe
vārt tikaḷ mattaḷa(m) muḷakku(m) mātar naṭaṇ cēyūṇ kāṇ mātevaṇ munṇe ||

⁵³ Literally 'Rudra's maidens' (*uruttira kaṇṇiyar*).

⁵⁴ AKP, *valampuric-carukkam*, 53:

This verse, too, has a prescriptive air. As with the rest of this section, which is concerned with defining where every ‘type’ of worshipper is supposed to be standing in the temple, the verse is focused on the ‘staging’ of standard worship. However, since the descriptions are very close to those of the dancers and the *pāracavar* that we have seen in the *town section*, we can safely assume that for Maṛaiñāṇa, when the *pāracavar* take the role of temple musicians and dance masters, they are equivalent with the people titled *uvaccar*.⁵⁵ Before addressing this point, let us examine one more reference that Maṛaiñāṇa makes to the *pāracavar*, in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s following chapter.

The penultimate chapter of the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* is called *ālayatt’-ōṭu-puriy-ākkiya-carukkam* (‘the chapter on the making of the town along with the temple’). As its name indicates, this chapter tells how the town and the temple at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai were built. As we might expect in a text of this genre, this is done at Śiva’s request, by the divine artisan Viśvakarma (Tam. *kammīyaṇ*, from Skt. *karmaṇya*). The description of Viśvakarma’s work is interesting, since it seems, like the *town section*, to reflect the actual sixteenth-century map of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. This chapter’s progression is the reverse of the *town section*’s: it begins with the innermost sanctum and spirals out to the temple’s *prakāras* and then to the streets that surround them. Viśvakarma first builds the inner sanctum of the temple, in which the lingam stands. He then completes it with the *artta-manṇapam* (Skt. *ardha-maṇḍapam*), that is, the hall immediately in front of the *garbhagrha*, and adds a shrine for Śiva’s bull. Next, he turns to build a hall for the dancers:

... And, putting on his head the feet of the Lord of the glorious Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, he (i.e. Viśvakarma) also made an excellent hall, in which
[women] with hair that resembles dark clouds, with moon-faces,
with eyes like *kayal* fish, with firm breasts that fill their bodices,
having practiced under the instruction of the *pāracavaṇ*
who have learned thoroughly the *Bharatam* tradition,
perform dance.⁵⁶

cirattiṇ urat tēṇṭu taṇaiṇ civaṇ munṇe tecikaṇār
raritt’ arañkīr pukuntu paṇint’ āṭuvaḷe taḷiyillāl
puritt’ uvaccaṇ upatecam paṇint’ arañkīr paratam uṇarnt’
uruttira kaṇṇiyar tammaiṇ āṭṭuvippan ukapp’ urave ||

⁵⁵ The word *uvaccaṇ*, mentioned before, is the singular form; *uvaccar* is the plural form.

⁵⁶ AKP, *ālayatt’-ōṭu-puriy-ākkiyac-carukkam*, 10:
ārāyntu parata vitiy āṭṭuvikkap pāracavaṇ payiṇrey āṭal

Maṛaiñāṇa emphasises here, again, the significance of ritual dancing to the sixteenth-century temple worship in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, describing it as structured into the temple's blueprints, so to speak, by Viśvakarma himself, who knows his lord's heart. A part of this age-old tradition, points Maṛaiñāṇa, is the role of the dance-master who is, and has always been, a *pāracavaṇ*.

We can, at this point, summarise what the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* tells us about the group called *pāracavar*. First, they are, indeed, identical to the *pāraśava* category, which is defined as the sons born to brahmin fathers and *śūdra* mothers. Thus, they are a sub-group of the *anuloma*, and, in general, related to the various mixed-*varṇa* groups whose presence in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai is emphasised in the text. Second, they serve in the temple not only as accompanying musicians to the dancers' performances but also as their dance-masters, following the *Bharatam* tradition. They are experts in arts and music, they play cymbals (*talam*), *mattalam* drum, and other (unspecified) instruments. They are staunch Śiva devotees and wear *śaiva* marks, such as the holy ash. They perform their ritual function, along with the dancers, in front of the temple's main sanctum, and their ritual presence is considered a part of the temple's mythological past. Lastly, they are equivalent with the group of temple professionals called *uvaccar*, and are also known to be Kālī priests who follow a textual tradition called *yāmala*.

Pāracavar and uvaccar in ritual manuals and temple inscriptions

The *Brahmayāmala* is a Sanskrit text which belongs to the tantric *Vidyā-pīṭha* tradition. The South-Indian recension of this text, deviating from the other recensions, prescribes a regular cult of Cāmuṇḍā/Bhadrakālī and the seven mothers (*saptamātṛ*) in front of fixed idols, to be performed by *pāraśava* priests (Sanderson 2014, 40–41). This prescription is in accordance with temple inscriptions from the beginning of the second millennium (Sanderson 2007, 277n140), and thus seem to reflect, at least to some extent, the ritual reality in the Tamil region around that period. A verse from the *Brahmayāmala* quoted by Sanderson, explains that the *pāraśavas* become, through initiation, *paraśaiva*, and thus are qualified for ritual function in the *śaiva* context (Sanderson 2007, 277n142). Hence, this textual tradition

*kār ārntav aḷakattār kaṇivāyār matimukattār kayal por kaṇṇār
vār ārnta vaṇa mulaiyār naṭam puriyu(m) maṇṭapamu(m) matikkac cēyṭāṇ
cīr ārnta tiruvaṇṇāmalai maruntaṇ aṭik kamalaṇ cirattum vaitte ||*

explains the origin for a fusion of the terms *pāraśava* and *paraśaiva*, or the alternation between them, which, as we shall see below, is sometimes found in later records.⁵⁷

As Sanderson points out, the *pāraśavas* appear also in the *vaiṣṇava* ritual context. For example, the medieval south Indian *Vaikhānasadharmaśūtra* (143.1–2) says: ‘The *pāraśava*, born of a brahmin man and a *śūdra* woman, lives [by one or other of the following professions:] by performing the worship of Bhadrakālī, by painting, by divination from physiognomy, by playing musical instruments, or by massage.’⁵⁸ The *Śrīpraśnasamhitā*, a medieval *pāñcarātra* text, mentions the *pāraśava* in the context of the great festival (*mahotsava*). In the festival, the *pāraśavas* are ‘the “official” accompaniment of the god,’ walking in front of the image in the procession and playing various musical instruments (Kersenboom 1987, 123–124). Another *vaiṣṇava pāñcarātra* text, the *Pādmāsāṃhitā*, also defines the *pāraśava* as the offspring of a brahmin father and *śūdra* mother, and says their ritual duty is the worship of the ‘seven mothers’ (*saptamātrī*).⁵⁹ In addition, the *Pādmāsāṃhitā* says the *pāraśavas* have a special function in the annual festival (*brahmotsavam*): in the *bherītāḍana* (‘beating the drum’) ritual, which opens the festival, the person to beat the drum (after the guru) is supposed to be a *pāraśava*, ‘who knows the subdivisions of the musical rhythms.’⁶⁰

Curiously, while the *vaiṣṇava* ritual texts define ritual roles for the *pāraśavas*,⁶¹ in the medieval *śaiva* context (i.e. *āgamas* and other ritual

⁵⁷ The Tamil lexicon explains both *pāracavaṇ* and *paracaivaṇ* as ‘a member of the *uvaccar* caste.’ See also the references given below to Thurston and Rangachari (1909) and Ghose (1996).

⁵⁸ *viprāt śūdrāyām pāraśavo bhadrakālīpūjana-citra-karmāṅgavidyā-tūryaghoṣaṇa-mardana-vṛttiḥ* || (translated by Sanderson 2007, 277n142).

⁵⁹ *Pādmāsāṃhitā*, *caryāpāda*, 1.36–37.

⁶⁰ *Pādmāsāṃhitā*, *caryāpāda* 10.140a: ... *tāla-bheda-vidbhāna-vit* || (translated by Hüskens 2013, 119).

⁶¹ While a detailed analysis of the overrepresentation of the *pāraśava* in *vaiṣṇava* ritual texts is beyond the scope of this study, it is plausible that this may relate to the competition between *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* sects in medieval India. This rivalry, driven by the quest for resources and religious dominance, led both *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* temples to make strategic adaptations to appeal to a broader range of devotees. On the *vaiṣṇava* side, this included the incorporation of goddess shrines within *vaiṣṇava* temples (Champakalakshmi 2011, 152). It is conceivable that a similar motivation may have prompted the integration of goddess-devotee communities, such as the *pāraśava*, into the *vaiṣṇava* ritual system by assigning them roles in annual temple festivals. In contrast, such measures with regard to goddess-devotee communities may have been less neces-

manuals), the *pāraśava* seem to have had a less significant or less distinct ritual function, since they are almost never mentioned.⁶² In addition, when the *śaiva* texts address the identity of the musicians and dance masters, their *varṇa*-affiliation seems to be insignificant. According to the *Uttarakāmi-kāgama* (79.14–16), for example:

“The dance-master, the *mṛdaṅga*-drum⁶³ player, the singer, the trumpet/pipe player, and the *muraja*-drum⁶⁴ player—are known as ‘the five masters.’ They come from [any of] the four *varṇas* or the *anulomas*, they are proficient in the knowledge of [all] musical instruments, [dramatic] production, song, dance, etc. They are familiar with [all] the nine dramatic sentiments (*rasa*), and they are my⁶⁵ faultless devotees.⁶⁶”

This passage emphasises the ‘masters’ artistic expertise and knowledge alongside their devotion to Śiva, in a manner much reminiscent of the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s *town section* verses that we have seen above. Unlike the *vaiṣṇava* texts, the knowledge and practice of dance-drama is presented

sary within the *śaiva* tradition, where goddess worship already had a longstanding, integral role and was foundational to the *śaiva* religious system.

⁶² The *Tantrikābhidānaśāstra* has no entry for *pāraśava*, but only a short one under *pāraśaiva*, which lists three mentions in *śaiva āgamas*. All mentions define the *pāraśaiva* as a type of caste, without further elaboration (Goodall and Rastelli 2013, 436). In Kersenboom’s reconstruction of the music and dance performance in the temple daily and occasional (*naimitya*) festivals, only the *vaiṣṇava* sources mention the *pāraśava*. In all my other attempts to find references to the *pāraśava* in the *śaiva āgamas*, I came upon a single reference in an alternative reading of the *Ajitāgama*’s *kriyāpāda*, 27.268. This verse, a part of the *utsavakrama* (‘order of [performing] the festival’) section, reads (in the alternative form, suggested in a footnote) as follows:

tāla-hasta-yuto vāma-bhāge gāndharva-saṁsthitaḥ | maddalam ca mṛdaṅgam vā saṁvye pāraśavaḥ smṛtaḥ ||

This could be vaguely translated as: ‘the [person] known as *pāraśava*, skilled in music, [stands/proceeds] on the left side [of the deity?], with cymbals in his hands, and on the right [side], [beating] the *maddalam* (i.e. *mardala*, in a Tamilized form) [drum] and the *mṛdaṅgam* [drum].’

⁶³ *Mṛdaṅga* or *mardala* is the Sanskrit name for the Tamil *mattalam* drum.

⁶⁴ Tamil *muracu* or *muracam*.

⁶⁵ The speaker in this passage is Śiva.

⁶⁶ *Uttarakāmi-kāgama* 79.14cd–16: *nartako mardavaś caiva gāyako vāṁśikas tathā || tathā mauravikaś caiva pañcācāryāḥ prakīrtitāḥ | cāturvarṇyānuloṁmotthā nāṭya-veda-kṛtāśramāḥ || bhāvanā-geya-nṛttādi-vādyā-jñāna-viśāradāḥ | nava-nāṭya-rasa-jñāś ca mad-bhaktā vītakalmaṣāḥ ||*

as a complementary part of the musical skill. At the same time, these musicians/dance-masters are not defined by their *varṇa* at all—rather, they are non-hereditary experts. A similar impression arises from Aghoraśivācāriya's thirteenth-century *Mahotsavavidhi*, a ritual manual on the annual festival in Śiva temples, in which the drummers and musicians, although clearly essential for the performance of the festival—as well as for the daily ritual routine—are mentioned through occupational titles (e.g. *vādyaka*, *bheritāḍaka*), without any reference to their social affiliation (Davis and Orr 2007, 83).

In short, the various medieval ritual manuals do not provide a consistent description of the *pāraśava*'s identity and ritual function: the *Brahmayāmala* says they are Bhadrakālī priests, the *vaiṣṇava saṃhitās* agree with the latter function but add that they also have the role of drumming in the temple's main festival. Nevertheless, they do not mention any relation to dance. The *śaiva āgamas* do not mention the *pāraśavas* at all, and suggest that temple musicians, who should also be dance experts, can belong to any *varṇa*.

Since *pāraśava* is a Sanskrit word, it may not be a surprise that it does not appear frequently in Tamil records. In Coḷa-period inscriptions, for example, the standard Tamil term for temple drummers is *uvaccaṇ* (or *uvaccar*, in plural), and references to them are abundant, reflecting the essential part that drummers had in the daily temple rituals during this period (Orr 2000, 92–93). As Leslie Orr points out, another related term, which appears less frequently (only thirteen Coḷa inscriptions mention it), is *naṭṭuvar*. This term is probably derived from the word 'dance' (*naṭṭu/naṭṭam*), yet the function of the *naṭṭuvar* seems to overlap to some extent with the *uvaccar*: the *naṭṭuvar* are listed together with temple women in some records of endowments (Orr 2000, 236n18), but in several cases, they are associated with the *uvaccar* or with other musicians and are given drumming rights (Orr 2000, 107). Orr suggests that the *naṭṭuvar* may have been a separate group of temple professionals, who competed with the *uvaccar* over drumming rights, and with another group called *cāntikkūttar*, for the role of dance masters (Orr 2000, 237n20). As we shall see below, in the case of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, these terms are almost never used in the temple inscriptions, but neither is the term *pāraśava*. The only Tamil source I could find that speaks directly of *pāracavar* in the context of dance and music is the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century commentary of Nacciṇārkkkiṇiyar on the ancient grammatical and poetical treatise *Tolkāppiyam*. In his explanation of verse 91 of the 'Section on Semantics' (*pōruḷ-atikāram*), Nacciṇārkkkiṇiyar interprets the word *kūttar* (actors/dancers, from *kūttu*, 'dance') as '*pāracavar*, *velāḷar*, and others who are qualified/have the rights for the task of

that dance.⁶⁷ Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar indicates that the dancers (some of whom were probably male) belonged to different social groups. *Velāḷa* stands for a collection of non-brahmin castes, some of which are known to have been communities who traditionally dedicated their daughters as temple dancers. His mention of *pārācavar* as a separate group is curious and left otherwise unexplained. However, it shows that in this commentator's time (the fourteenth to fifteenth century), the name *pārācavar* was indeed used to indicate a social group to which temple performers used to belong.

Before returning to the specific case of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, it is important to point out some parallels between the various medieval records presented above and modern records on temple drummers. One example of such a record is Ute Hüsken's recent description of the annual festival (*brahmotsava*) of Kāñcipuram's Varadarājapērumāl temple, which follows the *Pāḍma-sambhitā* tradition (Hüsken 2013). According to Hüsken's informant, the drummers who perform the *bheritāḍana* belong to the group called *occaṇs*, who also have the right of playing the cymbals (*taḷam*) during this ceremony (Hüsken 2013, 124–126). The word '*occaṇ*' is considered a contracted form of *uvaccaṇ*, mentioned earlier. Hüsken's informant adds that in the past, Kāñcipuram's *occaṇs* used to play the cymbals (*taḷam*) during the invocation of God (*tiruvārātanam*) as well (Hüsken 2013, 120n54).⁶⁸ However, they are not related to the musicians of Varadarājapērumāl temple; they are non-brahmin priests who serve in a nearby *ēllaiyamman* ('village goddess') temple.

A *śaiva* parallel to the latter was recorded by Rajeshwari Ghose, in her work on the traditions of the Tyāgarāja temple of Tiruvārūr (Ghose 1996). The *uvaccaṇs* of Tiruvārūr, according to Ghose, are the hereditary temple musicians, but they also serve as priests at the nearby *Piṭāriyamman* temple (dedicated to the village/'folk' goddess Piṭāri). Somewhat like in the Varadarājapērumāl temple, the *brahmotsavam* of the Tyāgarāja temple begins with a rite that involves tying a thread on the wrist of an *uvaccaṇ*, by which he becomes linked to the Tyāgarāja (Śiva) temple and performs service there (Ghose 1996, 223). In addition, Ghose mentions that the term *paraśaiva* (but not *pāraśava*) was used to denote the *uvaccaṇ* class in Tiruvārūr and, most commonly, in the Kāñcipuram area (Ghose 1996, 224).

⁶⁷ *kūttar āyir pārācavarum velāḷarum piṇarum avv-āṭar rōlirku uriyorum* (Tōlkāppiyar 1948, 318).

⁶⁸ According to Hüsken's description, during the ceremony they are 'disguised' as brahmins, getting the sect marks painted on their body and the sacred thread put on them by the temple's drummers (Hüsken 2013, 120–123).

The use of *paraśaiva* to denote an *uvaccaṇ/occaṇ* is also indicated in Thurston and Rangachari's early twentieth-century *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, in which there is no entry for *pāraśava* but only for *paraśaiva* (originally *parasaivan*). *Parasaivan* is defined there as 'a title of *occans*, who are śaivites, and priests at temples of Grāma Devatas (village deities)' (Thurston and Rangachari 1909, vol. 6, 139). A few details relevant to the present study are subsequently given by Thurston and Rangachari, under the entry for *occaṇ* (Thurston and Rangachari 1909, vol. 5, 419–420). First, *parasaivan* (i.e. *paraśaiva*) is considered one among the many titles of the *occans*, some of which are caste titles (e.g. *mutaliyār*), while other are occupational titles (e.g. *arcaka*, *pūcālī*). Second, in the (pre-1947) Chingleput district, which is adjacent to the North Arcot district of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, some *occans* acted as the *devadāsīs*' dance-masters and were titled *naṭṭuvar*. Third, while the *occans* are for the most part *śaiva*, some of them also belong to the *vaiṣṇava* sects. However, the *occans* are described by Thurston and Rangachari as carrying a rattling brass bracelet, which is not mentioned in any other record about them, and an *utukkai* drum, which is different from the *mattaḷam* drum (or *tavil* drum) usually associated with the temple drummers.

Thus, these modern records seem to suggest that in the twenty- and twenty-first centuries, the ritual responsibilities allotted to the *pāraśava* in medieval *vaiṣṇava* texts were taken up by the group called *uvaccans/occans*. This was also the case at least in some of the *śaiva* temples, where the *uvaccans* were also called *paraśaiva* (which, as we have seen above, was sometimes considered interchangeable with *pāraśava*). However, the standard affiliation of the *uvaccaṇ/occaṇ* in modern times is with the 'lower' village goddesses' temples and not with Bhadrakālī temples.

From all the above materials, it seems plausible that the group called *uvaccaṇ/occaṇ* in Tamil was identical to the group that the medieval *yāmala* and *vaiṣṇava* texts call *pāraśava* (which is also the same group that Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar mentions in his commentary), and that this group 'suffered a decline in social status and had a much more marginal ritual status as drummers and priests who serve village goddesses' (Orr 2000, 107). However, the *Arunākiriṇṇam* may suggest a different take on this issue, in its references to the relations between the *pāracavar* and *uvaccar*.

Although in the modern records *uvaccaṇ/occaṇ* is a caste title, it was probably originally an occupational title for drummers, derived from the word *uvaccu*, which is a synonym for the *mattaḷam* drum. Similarly, *naṭṭuvan* is an occupational title for the dance masters. As the *śaiva* ritual manuals suggest, these occupations were not necessarily hereditary. The drummers

and dance masters were, most probably, male offspring of temple dancers. Since they were born outside the frame of marriage, they could not be defined by caste (which depends on the identity of the father). At the same time, however, the *vaiṣṇava* manuals insist that the identity of at least some drummers has to be *pāraśava*, that is, the sons of brahmin men and *śūdra* women. Clearly, there was some variation in the identities of temple drummers.

Pāraśavas could not have been a stable social group: a *pāraśava* cannot beget a son who is a *pāraśava*; the only possibility of continuity is when a *pāraśava*'s sister or daughter has a child with a brahmin, and this, perhaps, was not always possible. The title *uvaccaṇ*, on the other hand, could have been used to denote drummers of various social affiliations. In the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, the *pāracavar* are clearly drummers and dance masters, but they are also described by their appearance and customs. However, when Maṛaiṇāṇa uses the title *uvaccaṇ*, it is only with regard to their ritual function. Thus, I would like to suggest that when he writes that the *pāracavaṇ* is 'considered to be [the person] called "*uvaccaṇ*"', he means that the *pāracavar* are also known to be a part of a larger group of temple performance artists, which goes under the general title *uvaccar*.

In other words, I would like to suggest that the group which gathered under the occupational title *uvaccaṇ* 'swallowed' the former definition of *pāraśava*, and eventually formed a caste that could sustain itself and maintain its own social boundaries, as we find in the twentieth-century records. This may explain the variations in Thurston and Rangachari's description of the *occaṇ* caste, with its many titles (of which the *pāraśava/paraśaiva* is only one), as well as the variety of insignia (e.g. the type of drum).

The Aruṇakirippurāṇam and the tradition of ritual dancing in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai

The *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s lyrical prelude suggests that dancing and drumming were central and even crucial to the ritual routine of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple in the sixteenth century, as the dancers and *pāracavar* are situated (in the text and thus in space) closest to the main deity. Although the temple inscriptions barely mention the presence of dancers, and even less the presence of drummers or dance masters, they do provide some context which supports the ritual scene that the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* depicts.

The inscriptions of the Aruṇācaleśvara temple in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai were collected and published in full by Marie-Louise Reiniche in the first volume of *Tiruvannamalai: un lieu saint śivaïte du sud de l'Inde* (1989). Among them,

none makes any reference to *pāracavar*. Nevertheless, about two dozen of them mention temple performers, mostly the *tevaraṭṭiyār*, that is, the (female) temple dancers.⁶⁹ Most of these inscriptions are concerned with financial matters related to individuals from the temple-dancers' community, or with legal issues that are related to the community as a whole. Others document endowments designed to support, among other temple personnel, the musicians and dancers.

These inscriptions provide some information on the changing size of this community, through the ages. For example, an inscription from 1263 (no. 205)⁷⁰ records a transaction of a person identified as the son of 'one of the twenty-four temple-dancers (*tevaraṭṭiyār*).' One fragmented inscription from 1287 (no. 283) records an endowment by a Pandya king, which seems to have been for supporting, among others, forty temple dancers. An inscription from 1330 (no. 290) records the cancelling of the previous year's debt of the dancers' community, thus suggesting that the earlier promise of support was not sufficient or, perhaps, did not last very long. The next inscriptions that record such endowments are from the Vijayanāgara period. In 1509, an endowment was made by Vīranarasimharāya to support, among others, six temple dancers, two Veda reciters, and two Tēvāram reciters (i.e. *oṭuvār*). This was just before the rise to the throne of the famous Kṛṣṇadevarāya who, less than a decade later, in 1517, made a notable endowment, documented in inscriptions nos. 389 and 390. In addition to building a thousand-pillar hall and a *gopuram*, digging a water tank, and granting many other generous donations, Kṛṣṇadevarāya also made an endowment for supporting the salaries of sixty dancers, who would take part in the daily *abhiṣeka* of the deity, in addition to six dancers who would perform in a daily ritual named after himself. The next and last inscription in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai that mentions the temple-dancers is dated to 1567 (no. 424). This inscription documents what seems to be the conclusion of a conflict, according to which the dancers could go on living on both West and East streets, as they always have.

This small collection of inscriptions provides very little information, yet it reflects the rapid changes that the dancers' community had probably gone through. On the one hand, it is evident that there was a consistent presence of temple-dancers, from Coḷa times all the way through the sixteenth centu-

⁶⁹ The literal meaning of *tevaraṭṭiyār* is 'temple servants.' This seems to be the origin of the better-known Sanskrit term *devadāsī*.

⁷⁰ The inscriptions' numbers mentioned here follow their numbering in Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989.

ry and probably later, too. However, their official support depended on the power and wealth—and, very likely, the personal taste—of the ruler. Kṛṣṇadevarāya, who is known to have been an advocate and patron of art and literature, increased tenfold the number of officiating dancers who were employed by the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple.

When Maṛaiṇāṇa Campantār composes the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, it is three and a half decades after this endowment had been made. Kṛṣṇadevarāya has already been gone for over twenty years, but the Vijayanāgara dynasty is still in power, and the defeat in the battle of Talikota, which will mark the beginning of its decline, is still more than a decade away. Thus, we may assume that in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai during this time, the daily ritual involving sixty dancers was still taking place. But in fact, we can do more than just assume, since this is exactly what the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*'s lyrical prelude shows us: Maṛaiṇāṇa, with his strong emphasis on the town's dancers and musicians, highlighting the centrality of dance performances before the deity in ritual, provides us with a vivid portrayal of ritual life in sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.

The data given in the inscriptions supports, therefore, my former argument about taking (with caution) the town descriptions as partly realistic. And thus, we should also take seriously Maṛaiṇāṇa's special emphasis regarding the *pāracavar*. As I have noted above, the inscriptions say next to nothing about the drummers and dance-masters. Clearly, they, too, have always been there, as drumming is an essential part of the daily ritual. One inscription that mentions drumming is dated to 1402 (no. 345). This inscription records an endowment for an annual salary for one person, for drumming in front of the deity. The drummer is not a specific person, and he is also not defined by his social affiliation, but only through his instrument: it is an endowment for 'one *mattalam*[-drum] man' (*mattalam per ōṇru*). The *mattalam* drum is the same drum used by the *pāracavar* in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*, and also the same as the drum that accompanies temple-dancing in modern records. This inscription also mentions the context for this drumming position, which is 'the service of directing dance [performance]' (*naṭṭuvam iṭum paṇi*).⁷¹

More than a century later, Vīranarasimharāya makes the above mentioned endowment (inscription no. 381, dated to 1509), in which he gives

⁷¹ Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 1 part 2, 433 (no. 345, line 5). This can also be translated as 'instructing dance,' depending on the meaning given to *naṭṭuvam*. This part does not appear in the English translation given by Reiniche and Srinivasan, who takes this phrase, perhaps for the sake of clarity, to mean simply 'drumming.'

lands and their respective profits and taxes for the benefit of temple reconstructions and several services. Among the latter, we can find performance of *pūjā* (one person), Vedic recitation (one person), Tevāram singing (one person), six dancers, one storekeeper, and a watchman. But, in addition, he also orders some ‘allowance’ (*kaiccīvitam*) to be given to temple workers who fetch the water and camphor for the ceremonies, and to the ‘dance masters’ (*naṭṭuvar*) [and] instrumentalists (*muṭṭuvar*), these of the pipes/trumpets (*tiruciṇṇam*) [and] the drums (*uvaccaḷ*).⁷² This is the only reference in the inscriptions of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai to the words *naṭṭuvar* or *uvaccaṇ* (here only through the name of the drum, *uvaccaḷ*). Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s large endowment that follows (recorded in a 1517 inscription) does not mention any specific title for musicians or dance masters. Instead, it only says that the sixty dancers who are to participate in the daily *abhiṣeka* ritual should be financially supported ‘along with [their] appropriate “band”’ (*tevaṭṭiyār per aru-patu atukku takka mēḷam*).⁷³

These inscriptions reflect an already known fact: the status of the musicians and dance masters was lower than that of the dancers. This is easily discernible from the large number of inscriptions that mention the temple-dancers, even from Coḷa times, in comparison to those that mention musicians.⁷⁴ The dancers’ prominence is also evident in modern records on the role of the temple-dancers prior to the Devadasi Abolition Act: they had been an essential part of the daily rituals, while the musicians were only accompanying them.⁷⁵ Yet if we take Maṛaiṇāṇa’s description of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai seriously—as I believe we should—then we must also read his fascination with the *pāracavar* as reflecting the reality of his time.

If we take Maṛaiṇāṇa seriously, we must accept the possibility that in sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, there was a group of people who were musicians and dance masters, who were well-educated *śaiva* devotees, and who had ritual rites which they performed along with the dancers, whom they guided. While this description could apply to any group of well-supported traditional musicians and dance masters, the fact that Maṛaiṇāṇa emphasises over and over that they are *pāracavar*, while not mentioning any other name of a social or occupational group in such a consistent manner,⁷⁶

⁷² Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 1 part 2, 472 (no. 371, lines 11–12).

⁷³ Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 1 part 2, 484 (no. 389, line 7).

⁷⁴ See, for example, in Orr’s detailed study (Orr 2000).

⁷⁵ See, for example, Srinivasan 1985, 1870–1872.

⁷⁶ Maṛaiṇāṇa twice calls the female temple dancers, that is, the *tevaraṭṭiyār*, by the name *uruttirakkaṇikai* (*rudraṇikā*, ‘Rudra’s courtesans’), yet more often he does not

entails that it is a point worth repeating, or, in other words, something out of the ordinary.

Maṛaiṇāṇa does not mention any family relations between the *pāracavar* and the dancers. Nevertheless, as I mentioned above, it is traditionally accepted that the temple musicians were the dancers' children.⁷⁷ Thurston and Rangachari, for example, state that 'Among the Dasis ... some of the sons remain in the caste and live by playing music for the women to dance to, and accompaniments to their songs, or by teaching singing and dancing to the younger girls, and music to the boys. These are called Nattuvans' (Thurston and Rangachari 1909, vol. 2, 127). This is also congruent with Srinivasan's description of the *devadāsīs*' social system at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Srinivasan, the men who play in the *devadāsīs*' accompanying band (the *cinṇamelam*) and the dance masters (*naṭṭuvanaṇar*) were the male offspring of the *devadāsīs*' from their 'extra-marital alliances,' while the members of the 'large band' (*pēriyamelam*), in which the central figure was the (male) Nagaswaram artist (who nowadays functions as the temple musician), were the people born within the community (i.e. to men of the community who married the girls who were not dedicated to the temple). Another, similar record is given by Mines in his work on the *kaikkōḷar* caste. The *kaikkōḷar* are traditionally a weavers' caste and are also one of the two main castes who used to dedicate their daughters to temple service (Thurston and Rangachari 1909, vol. 2, 127).⁷⁸ According to Mines, 'The offspring of daasis had several options ... some male children were trained to become dance masters and were known as *Nattuvans*. But most arranged marriages among themselves and became musicians and drummers who accompanied the daasis' dances. They became known as Moolakkaarans (drummers)' (Mines 1984, 29). The *kaikkōḷar* case is particularly relevant to the present paper, since the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple's *tevaraṭṭiyār* (i.e. *devadāsīs*) seem to have belonged to the *kaikkōḷar* caste, which has several parallel references with the *tevaraṭṭiyār* in the temple inscriptions (Reiniche and Srinivasan 1989, vol. 4, 110–111). Another relevant observation mentioned by Mines is related to the ex-

refer to them by name or title, and simply says 'girls,' 'women,' or 'maidens,' as one can see in the verses given earlier in this paper.

⁷⁷ Hüsken, for example, says that 'the description of the drummer as 'children of a Brahmin man and a *Śūdra* woman' resonated with common perception that these people (especially the musicians) are children of devadāsīs and temple priests' (Hüsken 2013, 120n52).

⁷⁸ The other caste is 'right hand' *velāḷas*.

tra-marital relationship of the *devadāsīs*: ‘Daasis were sacrifices, in a manner parallel to other types of offerings made to temple gods. Brahmans took some of them as concubines; of the remainder, many became concubines of prominent men of the community and some became prostitutes’ (Mines 1984, 28).

Given these observations, I would like to suggest that when Maṛaiñāṇa says *pāracavar*, we should interpret it literally: the temple musicians and dance masters in mid-sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai were likely the sons of the *tevaraṭṭiyār* (temple dancers), whose fathers were known to be brahmins. Knowing the identities of their fathers would be technically possible if the temple dancers maintained monogamous (although extra marital) relationships with men, similar to those described by Srinivasan in her account of the *devadāsī* social system in the early twentieth century.⁷⁹

This suggestion is all the more plausible, given the large increase in the number of temple dancers that followed Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s endowment in 1517, which inevitably had to result in increasing numbers of male offspring born to temple dancers, among which some hierarchy may have been established, through the social status of the fathers. The identity of the musicians/dance-masters as ‘actual’ *pāracavar/pāraśava* can also explain why Maṛaiñāṇa finds it unusual: as we have seen above, in the *śaiva* context, the temple musicians do not belong to any specific *varṇa*-origin. We can be quite certain that this was standard for Maṛaiñāṇa, since the *Kāmikāgama*, from which the above-quoted passage on the identity of temple musicians is taken, was one of the most important *āgama* sources of his time, and his own disciple and nephew (Vedajñāna II) quotes heavily from this *āgama*, including this very passage on the ‘five masters,’ in his compendium of *śaiva* doctrine and ritual, the *Śaivāgamaparibhāṣamañjarī* (‘a cluster of discourses on the *śaiva* āgamas,’ edited by Dagens, 1979).

To conclude, Maṛaiñāṇa’s depiction of the dance and music traditions of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple in the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s lyrical prelude (and in some other chapters, too), reflects the centrality of these perfor-

⁷⁹ Srinivasan maintains that while a *devadāsī* was not permitted to marry, she was nevertheless allowed—and, in fact, expected—to engage in a ‘sexual liaison’ with a ‘proper patron and protector,’ for whom she was a ‘symbol of social prestige and privilege.’ The patron was ‘chosen by arrangement with her mother and grandmother,’ with a preference for ‘a Brahmin or a member of the landed and commercial elite.’ Due to the non-domestic nature of the relationship, the *devadāsī* would ‘owe’ the man neither householding services nor her offspring, and the children would have no claim to the father’s property (Srinivasan 1985, 1869).

mances within the temple's ritual routine, and is supported by a few small but significant pieces of evidence from the temple's inscriptions. His focus on the *pāracavar* further suggests that they were an important, perhaps even dominant, group within the social fabric of the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple, and that they stood out as unusual in the *śaiva* landscape, because they were, by definition, the sons of temple dancers and brahmin priests.

Conclusion

Literary works have significant potential for gaining insights into past societies and cultures. Creative expression can offer fresh perspectives on the social norms and intellectual currents of the past, often supplementing and enriching the more conventional historical textual records.

The case of Tamil *talapurāṇams* is unique: on the one hand, this is a genre of religious texts, structured to follow Sanskrit mythological telling, using the conventionalised style and form of Tamil poetry. At the same time, however, Tamil *talapurāṇams* also include some non-conventionalised parts, which allow poets the possibility of providing semi-realistic descriptions of the surroundings and atmosphere of the place that they praise. Thus, while information on rulers, priests, rituals, and donations can be traced in 'standard' textual sources (i.e. ritual manuals and temple inscriptions), the lives, practices, and social divisions of less central temple personnel are much less represented there, and therefore necessitate the use of additional resources, such as works of art and literature.

Using poetical works as historical records has some drawbacks. Biases and personal perspectives of authors may shape their works, rendering them partial and selective in their representation of historical events and societal norms. Literary works can also be constrained by the cultural and social contexts in which they were produced (e.g. a *śaiva talapurāṇam* will not describe the *vaiṣṇava* community of a town). This raises a practical question: how can we distinguish a representation of actual reality from a representation of an author's ideology, fancy, or imagination? These challenges underscore the need for a cautious and critical approach when performing a study of this type. In the case of the Tamil *talapurāṇams*, we can rely, to some extent, on literary conventions. All the verses quoted in this paper are highly conventional in the way they describe the town, the people, and the forms of worship. However, they were also tailored to fit the place that they describe. It is exactly this work of tailoring that we need to isolate when trying to historicise such texts. For this purpose, we must have an idea of

what a ‘standard’ representation is, in order to decide what can be considered non-standard in a certain description. Thus, the examination of a poetic representation should always be in comparison to other works of the same genre, preferably, works by the author’s teachers, contemporaries, and writers who belonged to the same scholastic lineage. In the case presented above, an earlier *talapurāṇam* by the same author (i.e. the *Kamalālayaccirappu*) served as a useful tool for identifying the specific points of departure from poetical convention into reality. The author, Maṛaiñāṇa Campantar, created the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s lyrical prelude in the same fashion as the *Kamalālayaccirappu*’s prelude, frequently reiterating descriptions and images. Therefore, the points in which he did *not* follow the earlier structure serve as ‘red flags’ that may signify instances of ‘tailoring.’

In this paper, I focused on one such instant: the author’s focus on the performance-artists of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and, among them, on one specific group—the *pāracavar*. The importance of the dance-rituals to the temple’s daily routine in Maṛaiñāṇa’s time is evident from its centrality within the lyrical prelude: seven verses of the *town section* (out of a total of fifty-three) are concerned with the dancers and *pāracavar*—more than with any other type of ritual practice or practitioners. Four of these verses appear at the very end of the lyrical prelude, that is, at the end of the poetical ‘journey’ through the town and into the heart of the temple, in front of the temple’s main sanctum, where the dance is performed. The fact that these are specific instances of tailoring was clear from the comparison to the author’s earlier *talapurāṇam* (the *Kamalālayaccirappu*) and to other works of the genre. The centrality of the dance-ritual in sixteenth-century Tiruvaṇṇāmalai is supported by the circumstantial evidence gathered from the temple inscriptions, which indicate that a few decades before the *Aruṇakirippurāṇam*’s composition, the number of temple dancers supported by royal patronage was increased tenfold. As for Maṛaiñāṇa’s special interest in the *pāracavar*—the musicians and dance-masters—I suggested that his interest was due to their social identity (being the sons of dancers and brahmin priests), strongly emphasised by the author because of its irregularity within the *śaiva* ritual context.

In conclusion, the above case study shows the potential of Tamil *talapurāṇams* as historical sources on the places they eulogise, given that we know how to read it out from them. For this purpose, the lyrical preludes, that is, the descriptive chapters on the land and town, are particularly valuable. Since these chapters are intentionally related to a real and known place but are not dominated by the need to convey a specific narrative or doctrine, they allow poets to reveal different points of view than what we usually find

in mythological or religious narratives. As in the current case, these perspectives may include a sense of commitment towards historical reality, which is expressed within the ‘conventionalised’ poetical world. The types of historical data we can gather from these texts are mostly related to ritual activities and temple-related institutions, but are not limited to them. We can find references to underlying connections between different temples of the same ‘sacred territory’ (i.e. *talam/sthala*), or to its pre-modern links with other temples or pilgrimage destinations; we can gain knowledge on the towns’ geography and planning, and on many aspects of early-modern material culture (e.g. in the many market descriptions). Thus, the potential data that can be derived from Tamil *talapurāṇams*, cross-referenced with other types of records, could serve as a basis or support for a wide variety of historical studies.

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Brahmakṣetra, brahmakṣatra:
The Keralan literary landscape in messenger poetry

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Messenger poetry, *dūtakāvya* or *sandēśakāvya*, is a genre which needs no introduction. Raised on the foundations of Kālidāsa's seminal *Cloud Messenger* (*Meghadūta*, ca. fifth century CE) messenger poetry became one of Sanskrit's most beloved literary forms. The trajectory of its development was by no means linear and, for about five centuries after Kālidāsa's floruit, there is a notable lack of surviving messenger poems. After the turn of the millennium, Sanskrit messenger poetry rather suddenly bloomed back to life in many areas of South Asia, finding particularly fertile ground in Kerala.

It has already been noted by Yigal Bronner and David Shulman that the resurgence of *dūtakāvya* marked, 'the crystallisation of an independent regional Sanskrit tradition,' (Bronner and Shulman 2006, 12) and in this paper, I will trace one branch of this resurgence in relation to the historical and social realities of 'medieval' Kerala and consider the revival of the genre as part of a larger ideological movement. In the context of Kerala, I am using 'medieval' to refer to the time period from the fall of the last 'Empire' of the Malabar Coast—the Cēra Empire which ended when the final king, Rāma Kulaśekhara left his throne around 1125 CE—to the arrival of the first foreign colonial powers, specifically the Portuguese who quickly started establishing themselves after the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in 1498.

1. Kerala

1.1 *Historical background*

Most historians of Kerala believe that the Cēras, who ruled from Mahodayapuram (Makōtai/Koduṅgallur), instituted the final iteration of a centralised Keralan state.¹ After their fall, likely to Cōḷa expansion, in the early twelfth century CE, Kerala never again experienced centralised rule and, instead, local principalities concentrated around key urban trade centres rose to power. The Mahodayapuram Cēras, whether emperors, kings, or overlords, seemed to embody *dharmasāstric* ideals and used the titles *cakravartin* and *nāḷādhirāja*, as seen in the records of Rāma Kulaśekhara, 1102 CE (Ayyar Ramanatha 1924, 40ff.) and King Rājaśekhara, 830 CE, (Gopinatha Rao 1916, 8ff.). Yet, the majority of the inscriptions dating from their reign seem to be documents related to local level administration. Narayanan (2013) collects 150 of what he considers to be Cēra inscriptions. Of these, 80 mention regnal years and royal names while the other 70 are either dateable or approximately dateable to the Cēra period.

The main role of their state, at least in the locales where their inscriptions are found, seems to have been that of ensuring the execution of justice and managing land relations. Historian Manu Devadevan posits that in the case of Kerala and the Cēra kingdom, these very land relations and the supra-political ways in which they were administered, along with the complexity and robustness of local-level polities, finally led to the complete redundancy of the state mechanism in Kerala (Devadevan 2020, 119).

1.2 *Brahmin temple communities*

Brahmins were crucial political players in early-medieval and medieval Kerala. While there is evidence in poetry that there were Brahmin settlements on the Malabar coast in the early centuries CE—the anthology *Akanāṇūru* (third to sixth century CE) speaks of Vedic sacrifices and eternal fire in Cellūr made to commemorate the sacrifice of Paraśurāma, the ‘Great One with an axe who rooted out the race of warriors’ (Viele 2014, 17)—historians M. G. S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat (1983), whose work I am most indebted-

¹ See the work of Kesavan Veluthat, M. G. S. Narayanan, and Manu Devadevan. Veluthat 2009 discusses the historiography of the Cēras in a number of chapters. On the other hand, Freeman (2003, 444–445), questions the very existence of a Cēra state.

ed to in this section, propose that Brahmins migrated to Kerala from the north in waves, bringing with them, among others, the foundational myth of Paraśurāma as the creator of Kerala. In the Keralan version of the Paraśurāma legend, the great warrior Brahmin raised the country of Kerala specifically for Brahmins to rule over.² These Brahmins set up villages around the most important religious sites and traditional history recorded in the *Kēraḷōlpatti* tells us that 64 Brahmin villages were instituted south of Gokarna with 32 of these falling in Kerala proper.³

Another revealing story recorded in these histories, is that the Brahmins imported the first Cēra king after realising that they needed someone to take care of state matters. Nevertheless, whoever was appointed to this position had to acknowledge the self-governance of the Brahmin communities at a local level. William Logan translates the relevant section of the *Kēraḷōlpatti* in his *Malabar Manual* ([1887] 2010): ‘When the Brahmins first appointed the king they made an agreement on oath with him to this effect—“Do that which is beyond our powers to do and protect. When complaints happen to arise, we will settle them by ourselves. You are not to question us on that point. For formality’s sake you may ask why we deal with affairs ourselves after making you king”’ (Logan 2010, 224).

The *Laghudharmaprakāśikā*, the *dharmasāstra* of the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala,⁴ is a notable source of normative and, as a result, essentially aspirational and idealistic, views on how a Brahmin-centred Kerala ought to function. While the legend of Paraśurāma is not told outright, the text posits itself as a summary of an earlier law-book called the *Bhārgavasṃṛti*,

² See Vielle 2014 on how the Paraśurāma myth changed to be so specific to Kerala. See Devadevan 2020, 250ff. for an overview and analysis of the main narrative frame of the *Kēraḷōlpatti*.

³ Veluthat often notes the importance of this legend (especially in Veluthat 2009 *passim*), as according to the *Kēraḷōlpatti* the first wave of Brahmins brought to Kerala decided to return north while the second wave, which ended up staying in Kerala, were forced to do so because Paraśurāma changed their appearance and customs—this stopped them from being able to move back ‘home.’ As Devadevan notes: ‘Latter-day works, like the *Kēraḷōlpatti* and the *Kēraḷamāhātmyam*, tell us more about the historical memories that a section of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century elites from Malabar chose to cherish. These texts are invaluable for understanding the mentalities and political aspirations of the period when they were put together [...]’ (Devadevan 2020, 120).

⁴ The text is also known as the *Śaṅkarasṃṛti*. See Unni 2003, 9ff. for an overview of its authorship and dating. While there is little agreement about when it was composed, it is rather likely that it is contemporaneous with the *Kēraḷōlpatti* which could be from around the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

composed by the sage Bhṛgu, Paraśurāma's great ancestor and one of the *saptarṣis*, seven ancient sages. In this text, Kerala is repeatedly referred to as Rāmakṣetra—the Land of (Paraśu)Rāma and Bhārgavakṣetra or Bhārgavakṣīti—the land of Bhṛgu's descendant, i.e. Paraśurāma. The *Laghudharmaprakāśikā* reverberates with the notion that Brahmins hold a unique position in Keralan society, not just in cultural or religious practice, but also in the most mundane situations. For instance, they should not have to pay tax⁵ and should make up part of the king's most trusted cabinet, or even take over his entire administration!⁶

Numerous passages of the text acknowledge the peculiar practices of the Malabar Brahmins, including their dress, behaviour, and hereditary laws which allow only the eldest son of a Nambudiri family to become a householder (and so the sole inheritor of the family property)⁷ while allowing the younger brothers to engage in relationships (*sambandham*) with women of other castes, including *śūdra*, without incurring pollution. Any children born in these relationships would belong to the woman's side of the family and, in contrast to the patrilineal Nambudiris, other political classes of Kerala, among them the Nāyars, followed a matrilineal system of inheritance. The *Laghudharmaprakāśikā* explains these two symbiotic systems of inheritance in detail, and the *sambandham* relationships were another way in which Brahmins and powerful Nāyar families further strengthened their cooperation at local levels, building on each other's influence and creating a state-independent community of interest.

⁵ Verses 10.2.17c,d–18: *brāhmaṇebhyaḥ karādānam akṛtvā yo 'vanīpatiḥ* || 17.

rakṣet prajāḥ sa tu pretya brahmalokam avāpnuyāt |

āpanno 'pi na kurvīta rājā tebhyaḥ karagrahaṃ || 18.

'A king who protects his subjects without taking taxes from Brahmins will reach Brahmā's heaven after death. A king should not tax Brahmins even if he were in serious trouble.'

Brahmins are often exempt from paying taxes in other *dharmaśāstra* texts.

⁶ Verse 10.3.20: [*rājā*] *vyavahārān svayaṃ paśyed vidvadbhir brāhmaṇaiḥ saha | brāhmaṇaṃ vā niyuñjīta vyavahārasya darśane* || 20.

'A king should see to his administration himself, with the help of various Brahmins, or he should employ a Brahmin to oversee his administration.'

Further in this section on the rules for kings, the text says that a king who runs his country while making sure to protect the Brahmins is like Prajāpati himself (v. 10.3.29).

⁷ Verse 5.3.5 reminds us that in Kerala (*bhārgavakṣītau*), thanks to this system, estates are not split through the generations. The last section of the text (12.4) lists out all 64 of the so-called *anācāras*, the peculiar *dharmaśāstric* rules specific to Keralan Brahmins only, with the acknowledgement that this is not what Brahmins elsewhere are taught.

We can thus see that while the Brahmins of early-medieval and medieval Kerala had an obvious religious role to play, they were also positioned to accumulate other types of social currency.⁸ The Village Council system seemed to have had limited royal supervision, with the state expected rather to oversee land transactions and land distribution, as well as being a third-party in the enforcement of inter-village agreements (*kaccam*) and the payment of fines and duties (Veluthat 1978; Narayanan and Veluthat 1983). It is significant to note that already during the Cēra period, epigraphical materials show that temple centres were moving towards a greater homogeneity and establishing shared legal definitions and judicial procedures.

Brahmin villages thrived during the Mahōdayapuram Cēra period as they continued to accumulate wealth from donations and, despite forming only about one or two percent of the total population, as Narayanan and Veluthat (1983, 265) estimate, Brahmins found themselves the biggest land-owners and landlords in Kerala. This, of course, went hand in hand with huge power over the tenants renting and working their land. To this we can add the soft power they wielded thanks to their cultural and religious capital—temples were important sites for education and culture, Vedic teaching, theatrical performances, and *itihāsa* recitation, which are all mentioned in Cēra inscriptions.

As local communities became stronger both politically and ideologically, the power of the Brahmins waxed and the authority of the state, whatever it had been, came to wane. One example brings this power dynamic into stark relief—the pillar inscription of the last king of the Mahōdayapuram Cēras, Rāma Kulaśekhara, the so-called Kollam Pillar Inscription from the Rāmeśvaram Temple (1102 CE):

‘The king [Śrī Kulaśekhara Cakravartin], [...] sitting in council with Āriya Brahmins, Nālu Tāḷi, [...] and other sāmantar, made amends [*prāyaścitta* LW] for some offence against the Āriyar (Brahmins) by donating paddy for daily feeding of Brahmins and leasing out a Cērikkal (crown colony) for that purpose to Kumaram Utaḷavarman of Vēṇaṭu.’ (Ayyar Ramanatha 1924, 40)

While it was not unheard of for the inscriptions of other rulers to mention that gifts were to be given to Brahmins as atonement, Ayyar Ramanatha

⁸ Rajan Gurukkal writes on this and earlier periods in South India: ‘The tacitly recognized ritual supremacy, resource potential, social control, political influence and cultural skills provided the brāhmaṇas with the best conditions of domination. They [...] took precedence over ruling powers’ (1996, 30).

(1924, 42–43) lists four of these mentioned in the chronicles of Trivandrum temples, the way this particular grant is phrased, with no indication as to what exactly the king is atoning for and with the emphasis on the Brahmins *as well as* the political Brahmin Council of the Four Villages, ‘Nālu Tāḷi,’ accompanying him as he makes this gift of atonement is quite striking. We could see this grant, as Manu Devadevan (2020, 149) has with the help of other supporting evidence, as illustrative of the significant shift of power which ultimately led to the impossibility of a centralised state mechanism in Kerala. Or, in other words, this inscription can be taken as an indicator that Kerala was in the final stages of a transformation of the local political economy (Devadevan 2020, 121). After the decline of the Cēras, local chiefdoms, *nāḍũ*, that had already been forming under Cēra rule, rose to prominence.⁹ While it is likely that Brahmin dominance was maintained long after the fall of the Cēras, it seems that on the eve of colonialism, their position had started to falter.

2. Literature

One of the most striking characteristics of post-Cēra literature is its deep engagement with the local—this is true for both *dūtakāvya* and other literatures of the period. In his seminal essay on the literary culture of premodern Kerala, Rich Freeman writes that the Maṇipravalam *Stories of the Courtesans* (*accicaritams*), composed around the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE mainly seem to serve as ‘the pretext for travel in and around the courtesans’ locales, yielding elaborate descriptions of routes, local communities and so on. [...] It indeed appears that one of the very points of this literature is to *figure territory*, to lay out a series of places in relation to each other’ (Freeman 2003, 457).

This local focus and the aim of creating cognitive spaces is also one of the defining features of Kerala’s *sandēśakāvya*s. The poets of post-Cēra Kerala were particularly fond of the genre, which provides the perfect vehicle for mapping out personalised regional maps reflecting the collective *imaginaire* of the poet and the in-group of his readers. Many of the messenger-poems of Kerala were composed by poets who served at the courts of local rulers, at a time when Brahmin families still held prominence. Thus, Rich Freeman notices that there is a

⁹ See Devadevan’s (2020) brilliant chapter and in-depth analysis of the Cēra inscriptions, in which he suggests that this shift was caused by the move from an agrarian economy dependent on rice farming to one based on commercial crops and maritime trade.

‘twin focus on the kingly and Brahmanical orders’ in the messenger poetry of Kerala, and that the genre seems to be ‘a celebration by this elite of itself and its own basis of socioeconomic power’ (Freeman 2003, 472).

At least twelve post-Cēra Sanskrit messenger poems have been published and many more are waiting to be brought to public attention. For the purposes of this paper, I will concentrate on the two oldest poems known to us, the *Śukasandēśa* (ŚS), *Parrot Messenger*, by Lakṣmīdāsa (second half of the thirteenth century CE) and Uddanḍa Śāstrī’s *Kokilasandēśa* (KoS), *Cuckoo Messenger* (fifteenth century CE). I will also refer to two other, significant *sandēśakāvya*s, Udaya Rāja’s *Mayūrasandēśa* (MS), *Peacock Messenger*, from the beginning of the sixteenth century CE and Mātṛdatta’s *Kāmasandēśa* (KāS), *Kāma as Messenger*, from the end of the sixteenth century CE.

The *Parrot Messenger* and the *Cuckoo Messenger* fit together to complete a literary map of the Malabar coast—one charts a route from the south and the other from the north, and they meet at the same destination in the area of modern Kochi. This maps on to what was seen as the heart of ‘Kerala proper’ and the area in which the Cēra capital of Mahōdayapuram once stood. We can also note that although both poems begin in Tamil country, the messengers make very few stops east of the Ghats. Once they enter Kerala, however, the poets zoom in and start paying attention to detail—they have the messengers stop with remarkable frequency to visit temples, places of learning, or local Brahmin celebrities.

2.1 *The parrot*

Lakṣmīdāsa’s *Parrot Messenger* was composed in the second half of the thirteenth century CE or in the early fourteenth century CE. It is 164 verses long and covers the story of the hero, probably the poet himself, who falls asleep after making love to his beloved consort, a temple dancer. The season is Autumn. The entire poem takes place in a dreamscape because after the protagonist finds himself teleported to Rāmeśvaram in Tamil Nadu in his sleep, we never see him wake up. In his dream, he knows that it will take him a month to get back to his beloved on foot, so he asks a parrot to take some words of consolation to her.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hence the separation is twofold—first, the couple is separated by the act of falling asleep; second, in the protagonist’s dream, in which he is physically teleported to the distant city of Rāmeśvaram. This type of separation becomes the standard in the mes-

The hero follows the standard *dūtakāvya* model and, after flattering the parrot for some verses, proceeds to describe to it the route it must take from Rāmeśvaram to Guṇaka (which is close to Mahōdayapuram), his hometown. At the Tāmraparṇī River (v.1.35), the parrot is told that it will need to choose the left-hand route that will lead it south and naturally force it to follow the coast all the way to the southern-most tip of the subcontinent, Kanyākumārī (v.1.35). The entire journey spans over 51 verses and comprises 21 stops, 16 of them in Kerala.

2.2 Kerala and the Brahmins

Stanza 1.34 of the *Śukasandēśa* serves as an introduction to Kerala:

You will then see the bountiful kingdom of the Brahmins,
which is a reflection of the pride of Paraśurāma's weapons.
Praised worldwide for the beautiful pepper plants and tall betel vines,
snaking around the coconut and areca nut trees.¹¹

According to the protagonist, the Brahmins have a legitimate claim on the country because they received it from Paraśurāma himself. Importantly, Kerala is referred to as *brahmakṣatra* which signifies not only Brahmin presence in the area but also Brahmin military dominance, with *kṣatra*—‘dominion,’ ‘supremacy’—evoking political and martial connotations that a more neutral *kṣetra*—‘land,’ ‘property’—may not.¹²

senger poems of Kerala, establishing the *Śukasandēśa* as the Keralan archetype for later poets. See Bronner 2013 for a similar process taking place in Tamil Nadu in the case of Vedāntadeśika's *Haṃsasandēśa*.

¹¹ *brahmakṣatram janapadam atha sphītam adhyakṣayethā
darpādarśaṃ dṛḍhatarām ṛṣer jāmādagnyasya bāhvoh |
yaṃ medinyāṃ ruciramaricottālatāmbūlavallī-
vellatkerakramukanikarāṇ keralān udgṛṇanti ||* ŚS 1.34.

¹² See Veluthat 1978, 102ff. on Brahmin warriors (*caṭṭas*) and organised Brahmin militia groups (*śālai*). We may also note that learning archery is prescribed for Brahmins in the *Laghudharmaparakāśikā*—the Keralan manual on *dharma*. Verse 1.1.25 says:

*sarabasyam dhanurvedagrahaṇaṃ viprabhūbhūjoh | smṛtas sādharmaṇo dharmo
gopathādhyayanaṃ tathā ||*

‘Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas should attain proficiency in archery as their common duty and the study of the Gopathabrāhmaṇa’ (Unni 2003, 173).

Further reinforcing the political and military undertones of the term *brahmakṣatra*

Mātṛdatta also writes about Kerala as *brahmakṣatra* in his *Kāmasandēśa*. When, in verse 1.61, the God of Love, Kāma, is moving somewhere on the banks of the Bharathappuzha, between Kochi and Thrissur, he is told to go to a place called Kurukṣetra:

Leave this place and go quickly to the village called Kurukṣetra.
Although Kerala had once lightened its load
thanks to the slaughter of the *kṣatriyas*,
it still hasn't been able to free itself of the weight of its fame as *brahmakṣatra*
because of the ascetic powers of its Brahmins born from properly restrained
practice.¹³

In addition to also calling Kerala a *kṣatra*, the political and military domain of the Brahmins, Mātṛdatta makes sure to remind us of the slaughter of *kṣatriyas* that is central to the Paraśurāma legend. Choosing to 'Sanskritise' this village's name as Kurukṣetra is also no innocent act as it instantly brings to mind the destruction of the *kṣatriyas* in the *Mahābhārata* war.

The peacock in Udaya Rājā's *Mayūrasandēśa*, similarly goes to a village, where:

You will see the favourite spot of Śiva—
the lord of Kailāsa who carries a crescent moon on his crown—
it is purified and known worldwide as *brahmakṣetram*.¹⁴

Coming back to the *Śukasandēśa*, in verse 1.38, we learn about an *agrahāra*, a Brahmin village instituted through donation, near the Śucīndram temple, famous for the fire ordeal. The *agrahāra* was so learned that even the house-parrots there recited the Vedas—in fact the parrots were so good at this, the young students could learn directly from them without needing the help of a teacher! The Brahmins there were also detached from worldly aims and were unfazed by gifts receive from the king.

is the fact that in medieval India it was often adopted by royal lineages moving from a Brahmin to a *kṣatriya* status (see Chattopadhyaya 2012, 74ff.).

¹³ *yābhi grāmaṃ drutam atha kurukṣetram asmāt pradeśād
yadviprāṇāṃ vibhitanīyamācārajātaiḥ tapobhiḥ |
brahmakṣatretya amitayasasas tāvad adyāpi neyam
kṣatrākṛāntyā laghur api mahi mucyate keralākhyā || KāS 1.61.*

¹⁴ [*drakṣyasi b.*] *kailāsādrer api bhagavataḥ premapātram pavitram
brahmakṣetram bhuvanaviditam kṣetram ardhendumauleḥ || MS 1.100c,d.*

Further [down the road from Śucīndram Temple] is a village which belongs to the Brahmins who keep the oblation-fires constantly alight. Even if the king were to donate an ocean of precious gems to them, they wouldn't blink an eye. In this village, the house parrots have had so much exposure to the Vedas that they themselves teach the complete texts to the boys, day after day.¹⁵

The hyperbolic image of parrots in Brahmin villages reciting the Vedas is also rather common in this corpus of messenger poems. As a matter of fact, an *agrabāra* called Kaṇṭamāṇikya described in the *Kāmasandēśa* is so learned that the parrot chicks, and not even full-grown birds, are academics.

Even a parrot chick, being on equal footing, confidently and repeatedly shushes the learned logicians discussing logic. What then to say of the people who are accomplished disputants?¹⁶

In the *Mayūrasandēśa*, we visit a Brahmin village called Saṃgagrāma where the peacock is told:

As you fly, visit these places which are deafened by the pervasive din of the house parrots practising the Three Vedas together with their *aṅgas*.¹⁷

Lakṣmīdāsa's Parrot meets many other Brahmin scholars and passes through other learned villages. For instance, in verses 1.62–63 we learn of an incomparable Brahmin village on the Phullā river (southern branch of the Periyar in Kochi) where young Brahmin boys prepare to take part in scholarly competitions and tests. In verse 1.64, there is a *śleṣa* based on the name of a brilliant scholar called Subrahmaṇya (or maybe Brahmin-hood personified) and the god of the same name.

The notion that Brahmins de facto ruled the country is reaffirmed in verse 1.69, a description of the inhabitants of the Cēra capital city of Mahō-

¹⁵ *agre kaścīd bhṛtabhutabhujām agrabhāro dvijānām
ratnaugbeṣv apy akrpaṇadhiyām rājaviśrāṇiteṣu |
citram citram ciraparicayād bālakān yatra sāṅgam
velām velām anu grhaśukā vedam adhyāpayante ||* ŚS 1.38.

¹⁶ *bālo 'py uccaiḥ pratibhuvi śuko yatra tarkoddhatānām
tārkiṃ vācam śamayati muhuḥ kiṃ punaḥ prauḍhavācaḥ ||* KāS 1.37c,d.

¹⁷ *paśyan paśyan pata grhaśukābhyastāsāṅgatrivedī-
mūrcchatkolāhalabadhiritāśāni deśāntarāṇi ||* MS 1.98c,d.

dayapuram, on the northern banks of the Cūrṇī, that is Periyar River. In the poet's times, Mahodayapuram was likely no longer the royal seat, and yet still the Brahmin presence that had marked the capital during Cēra rule is vividly conjured.

There, the king's union with Regal Lakṣmī is woven by the Brahmins' words.
The lordly Brahmins control sixty-four villages and lead a model life.
Masters in both science and arms, they resemble Paraśurāma,
and the places they live, filled with excellent *maṭhas*,
are resplendent with their presence.¹⁸

Lakṣmīdāsa is asking us to recall the legend of the original sixty-four Brahmin villages established in Kerala by Paraśurāma and bolsters the idea that these Brahmins did not just hold ritual or political sway over the land, but were also trained to wield arms if the need arose—after all, their great hero Paraśurāma was himself a warrior-Brahmin. This verse also reinforces the idea that the Brahmins were king-makers whose say-so gave a man the right to the throne and to fortune.

2.3 *The cuckoo*

The *Kokilasandeśa* was composed in the fifteenth century by one of Kerala's greatest adopted sons, Uddaṇḍa Śāstrī. The poem is 162 verses long and its story also begins with a dream. The season is Spring. Again, the hero falls asleep after making love to his beloved, a lady of the house of Mārakkara in Jayantamaṅgalam (Chendamangalam),¹⁹ and he is kidnapped from his balcony by some mischievous *apsarases*. They drop him off at the holy city of Kanchi where he awakens to hear an incorporeal voice inform him that his stay must last at least five months. He tries his best to simply wait it out,

¹⁸ *vācā yeṣāṃ bhavati nṛpatir vallabho rājyalakṣmyā
grāmān ṣaṣṭiṃ catura iha ye grāhyaceṣṭā nayanti |
śāstre śāstre 'pi ca bhṛgunibhaiḥ śaśvad udbhāsate yā
vipendrais tair vipulamaṭhāvaryāvalīṣu sthālīṣu ||* ŚS 1.69.

¹⁹ *Mayūrasandeśa* 1.83 calls Uddaṇḍa Śāstrī a 'moon of the ocean of brilliant poetry, a master poet' (*uddaṇḍākhyah surabhi-kavitā-sāgarenduḥ kavindraḥ*) in a land somewhere north of the Phullā river (vv. 1.71–73). The editor of the text, C. Kunhan Raja, goes to great lengths to identify exactly which village Uddaṇḍa was being connected to, however this seems to prove futile.

but soon becomes love-sick and asks a *kokila* (cuckoo) to take a message of solace to his beloved who is pining away back in Kerala. This poem has multiple, very clear allusions to the earlier *Parrot Messenger*, the prototype *sandēśakāvya* for Keralan poets.

Uddaṇḍa served as a poet and scholar at the court of Mānavikrama (ruled 1466–1475) the most celebrated of all the Zamorins of Kozhikode and a famed patron of the arts who was said to have had a group of ‘eighteen-and-a-half’ poets working in his court, the ‘half’ being a poet composing in Maṇipravālam (Kunjunni Raja 1980). In an introduction to his other surviving work, the play *Mallikāmāruta* (an homage to Kālidāsa’s *Mālavikāgnimitra*) Uddaṇḍa himself tells us that he was Tamil and that he had been born in the area of Kanchipuram but was forced to leave his homeland in search of patronage.²⁰ He travelled west until he found a suitable patron in the person of Mānavikrama. We can imagine that the route he prescribes for his messenger in the *Kokilasandēśa* could have been the very one he himself took as a young man looking for a better job and a new home. While he may have been unhappy about the patronage he received in his motherland, this did not impact upon the respect he had for Tamil Brahmins. In fact, we learn in verse 1.25 of a Tamil *agrahāra* where the schools echo with the purifying recitation of the Vedas. In the next verse appear the expected scholar parrots.²¹

The majority of the cuckoo’s journey takes place in Kerala, which the bird traverses from north to south. He flies from Tamil Nadu, over Hoysala country, to enter Kerala through the Western Ghats, using a pass in the north of the mountains. There are a total of 21 identifiable sites described

²⁰ See Rajendran 2020 for an account of Uddaṇḍa Śaṣṭrī’s life in the courts of Kerala and Unni’s introduction to his edition of the *Kokilasandēśa* for more about the court itself. As Rajendran notes, Uddaṇḍa writes about his background in the opening passages of his drama, the *Mallikāmāruta* (page 12ff. in the 1878 Bhaṭṭācāryya edition) where the poet says that he came from the area of Tuṇḍīra. Interestingly, in the times of the *Mayūrasandēśa*, this is common knowledge, as Uddaṇḍa is referred to as the ornament of Tuṇḍīra country (*tuṇḍīra-kṣmā-valaya-*) in verse 1.83.

²¹ Their dexterity in the sacred texts! Their discernment in every science!
Their bright flowing stream of perfect poetry!
But what’s the point of explaining any of this?
The parrots perched in every house tree around and reciting all of this will make things crystal clear.

*sā vaidagdbī śrutiṣu sa punaḥ sarvaśāstrāvagāhas
tac cāmlānaprasarasasaraṣaṁ niṣkalaṅkaṁ kavītvam |
tatratyānāṁ kim iha babunā sarvaṁ etat paṭhantaḥ
śṛṅge śṛṅge grhaviṭapināṁ spaṣṭayisyanti kīrāḥ ||* KoS 1.26.

by the poet, of which only 4 are in Tamil country. The rest of the journey, which spans around 266 kilometres over 54 verses, entails the description of 17 north and central Keralan locales.

As it swoops down from the Western Ghats upon entering Kerala, the cuckoo learns that this is where Paraśurāma decided to retire after he had slaughtered the *kṣatriyas* twenty-one times over. We are also reminded that, even in the non-Keralan versions of the Paraśurāma myth, once the *kṣatriyas* were no longer, the warrior-sage presented the entire world to the Brahmins.

Visit the Sahya mountains, famous world-over.
The houses there are covered in creepers,
and echo with the tinkling jewels of the sky-roving spirits at play.
Paraśurāma, head of the Bhṛgu family, retired to its slopes
after the slaughter of the *kṣatriyas* was over,
and he had presented the entire earth to the Brahmins.²²

As the cuckoo swoops down from the mountains onto the fertile plains of Kerala in verse 1.41, the Paraśurāma legend is once again called upon:

[On the mountain] you'll see the Amalakadharaṇī Temple of Viṣṇu,
he's holding the Śārṅga bow in his hand.
Clip your wings a bit as you fly down from its peaks,
and *look* at that valley in front of you, hugged by the ocean.
This is the thriving Land of Kerala, carpeted with betel plants.
It is the prize of Paraśurāma's heroic act.²³

²² *kriḍantīnām mukharitalatāmandiraṃ khecariṇām
bhūṣānādair bhuvanaviditaṃ sahyaśailaṃ śrayethāḥ |
kṣatradhvamsāt svayam uparato viprasātkṛtya kṛtsnam
pṛthvīcakram bhr̥gukulapatir yattate sannidhatte ||* KoS 1.39.
Note the compound verb *vīpra-sāt-√kr̥* meaning to present something to Brahmins (*vīpra*) specifically.

²³ *dṛṣtvā tatrāmalakadharaṇīmāndiraṃ śārṅgapāṇīm
tasmāc chailāt taṭam avataran kiñcid ākuñcya pakṣau |
kūle 'mbhodheḥ kramukakalilāṃ keralakṣoṇīm agre
paśya sphītām bhr̥gusutabhujāvīkramopakramam yā ||* KoS 1.41.
Note the extreme similarities, both semantic and lexical, between this verse and Śukasandēśa 1.34 discussed earlier.

2.4 Brahmins

Just like in the *Śukasandēśa*, we meet hosts of learned Brahmins at various temples and villages that the cuckoo passes through as it flies south towards its destination. These Brahmins are as influential as ever, with those in central Kerala painted as the most formidable.

The Brahmins of Kerala are world-famous.
Among them, those who live between the Vallī and Kauṇī Rivers
are especially celebrated.
And within that region, the greatest among them
in conduct, learning and authority,
dwell where the breeze from the Nilā blows.²⁴

The Nilā river is the Bharathappuzha which currently has its delta between Kozhikode and Thrissur. While this is not exactly the spot where Mahōdayapuram once stood, the banks of the Nilā are the traditional heartland of Brahmin learning (Rajendran 2020, 85). According to the *Laghubharmaparakāśikā*, v. 12.2.25, the Brahmins of Kerala ought not go on pilgrimages to the Ganges, since the Nilā is to be considered equally sacred. This view is championed by verse 1.51 in the *Kāmasandēśa* which tells us that the Nilā flows forth like ‘Gaṅgā incarnate.’²⁵

In this village on the banks of the Nilā visited by the cuckoo, we learn in the next verse of the *Kokilasandēśa*, lives an illustrious Brahmin family who bear the title Netranārāyaṇa. It is from this family that the Āḷvāṇceri Tamprākkal, the ‘head’ of the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala, was chosen. Ayyar calls him the ‘religious head of Kerala’ (Ayyar 1938, 23) and recalls many episodes in which Zamorins and kings prostrated themselves before the Āḷvāṇceri Tamprākkal to receive his blessing. In the *Kokilasandēśa*, we learn of Kerala being ‘cleansed by the countless merits of the Netranārāyaṇas’ (v. 1.77). The village on the banks of the Nilā visited by Kāma in the *Kāmasandēśa* is called Maṅgala, ‘auspicious’ and rather than being a place of learning or religious merit, it is a place of literature:

²⁴ *sarvotrṣṭā jagati viditāḥ keralesu dvijendrā
vallikaunyoḥ tadapi mahimā kāpi madhyaśritānām |
tatrāpy asyāḥ salilapavanā yatra yatra prathante
teṣāṃ teṣāṃ atisāyajuṣaḥ śilavidyānubhāvāḥ ||* KoS 1.76.

²⁵ *gaṅgā sāksāt vicalati nilā nāma [...]* || KāS 1.51b.

Once you've seen the Goddess, go quickly to the place called Maṅgala
and visit the Brahmin called Maṅgala,
a living talisman of auspiciousness in that land.
Love! He'll be able to compose the ending of any poem you put together!
He's Kālidāsa reborn, disguised in his current body.²⁶

In the *Kokilasandeśa*, the cuckoo immediately moves on to another Brahmin settlement, Raṇakhala, home of the Payyūr Bhaṭṭa Brahmin family, who all took the names Ṛṣi or Parameśvara.²⁷ The Maḥarṣi the cuckoo meets there knows the teachings of both schools of *mīmāṃsā*. As we learn in the subsequent verse, he also spends his time teaching and commenting on *śāstras*.

A little to the east, in a place called Raṇakhala, you will see the amazing and
sacred home of Maḥarṣi, a guru of both schools of *mīmāṃsā*.
A flock of scholars, absorbed in debate, has just arrived,
while a flock of parrots roosts in the rafters of the discussion hall.

If his attention were to be stolen by discussions with learned men,
or by writing commentaries, or by telling stories of Hari and Hara,
and acts of hospitality, then it's enough that you sing your *ko-kū*,
sitting on that hill in the pleasure-grove,
where calm Brahmins and birds (*dvija*) alike roam,
he'll surely be delighted hearing your sweet song.²⁸

²⁶ *dr̥ṣtvā devīm paṭugatir aṭan maṅgalaṃ gaccha deśaṃ*
tadbhūratnam dvijaṃ api tathā maṅgalaṃ maṅgalākhyāṃ |
vāggumphaṣya smara racayitum kaṅkṣitasyoktāśeṣaṃ
nirmāṭum yaṇ miṣakṛtavapuḥ kālidāsaḥ punarbhūḥ || KāS 1.52.

²⁷ See Kunhan Raja 1945 for an overview of Payyūr Bhaṭṭa history. Krishnamachariar writes that Maḥarṣi was one of the eight brothers of the Payyūr family who served with Uddaṇḍa at court. 'The eldest of the Payyur family was famous as Maḥarṣi, versed in Mīmāṃsa [sic], [...] Maḥarṣi is mentioned with reverence by him [Uddaṇḍa] in his Kokilasandeśa as Mimāṃsātrayakulaguru [sic!]' (Krishnamachariar 1937, 250).

²⁸ *kiñcit pūrvam raṇakhalabhuvī śrīmadadhyakṣayethāṣ*
tanmīmāṃsādvayakulaguroḥ sadma puṇyam maharṣeḥ |
vidvadvr̥nde vivaditumanasy āgate yatra śāśvad
vyākhyāśālāvalabhinīlayas tiṣṭhate kīrasaṅghaḥ || KoS 1.79.
śāstravyākhyā hariharakathā satkriyābhyāgatānām
ālāpo vā yadi saba budhair ākṣipet asya cetaḥ |

In the following verse, we learn that even if the *kokila* does not get a chance to ‘speak to’ the busy Mahārṣi, just knowing that it had been recognised by the great Brahmin is enough of an honour for the bird.

The general scholarly acumen of the Brahmins of Kerala is equally noted by Mātṛdatta in the *Kāmasandēśa* when the God of Love learns that, in the already mentioned village called Kurukṣetra, the Brahmins excel in every intellectual activity:

In the sciences, they release cascades of words that are naturally difficult.
In logic, they unravel chains of speech that are naturally severe.
In savouring poetry, they overflow with honeyed syllables
that are naturally sweet.
They are blazing with all knowledge,
who among them doesn’t deserve our respect?²⁹

Uddanḍa Śāstrī’s Kerala is, of course, the land of Brahmins but in his *imaginaire* it is rendered as a land of piousness and scholarship. The cuckoo leisurely visits temples and delights in the cool and peaceful hermitages filled with Brahmin polymaths. Uddanḍa does speak about the economic might of Kozhikode in one verse (1.62) but this is in the context of the booming maritime trade taking place in the royal capital of his patron. It seems that by Uddanḍa Śāstrī’s times, or in his environment at least, Brahmin-warriors and Brahmin-kings were not central to the story.

We can also note the differences in the overall atmosphere of the two poems—where the *Śukasandēśa* is set in Autumn and the parrot’s journey through Kerala is more of a matter-of-fact travelogue, the *Kokilasandēśa*’s Spring setting lends itself to a more dreamlike and sensual narrative. The poem is permeated by an erotic passion and the separation of the two lovers is not just depicted as bringing mental and physical anguish but also unfulfilled and frustrating arousal. The depiction of the landscape over which the cuckoo will pass is an eroticised hymn; all of nature is indeed playing its part in increasing the tension felt by young lovers who have been separated by fate.

*tad viśrabdhadvijaparivṛte niṣkuṭādrau niṣaṇṇaḥ
kokūyethāḥ sa khalu madhurāṃ sūktim ākarṇya tuṣyet ||* KoS 1.80.

²⁹ *yeṣāṃ śāstre prakṛtikāṭhino vartate vāgvivartas
tarkārambhe prakṛtiparuṣo jṛmbhate vakyagumphaḥ |
kāvyāśvāde prakṛtimadburāḥ syandate vāṇmarandas
te vā keṣāṃ na hi nutipadam viśvavidyāvidagdhāḥ ||* KāS 1.62.

3. Conclusion

In the tricky field of the history of Kerala, scholars have often turned to messenger poetry as primary sources, and much has been done in this field already. However, I am proposing to read *sandēśakāvya*s not only for their geographical itineraries or clues regarding the dating of religious festivals but to consider the process of positive and negative selection that went into the creation of literary landscapes. In other words, not to take the texts as mirrors or magnifying glasses into Kerala's history, but to understand them as parts of cultural practice in the specific political realities of the post-Cēra period.

The messenger poems of Kerala form a coherent corpus. The cognitive regions that impose themselves on the mind as one reads this body of work may seem vague and informal, but the accumulation of densely interrelated tropes that jump out from the page shows that they were meaningful and agreed upon by the people inhabiting them. As testimonies of the beliefs, political concerns, and aesthetic judgement of what was clearly a community of shared, unquestionably elite, interest, they serve an important role in helping us better understand the sociohistorical circumstances of medieval Kerala.

Post-Cēra poets were composing in a world where political authority and capital were decentralised and smaller principalities had risen to power. Their poetry had to appeal to a patron base of courtesans, rich merchants, and Brahmins rather than to an archetypical royal patron. They unfolded an image of Kerala as a place of Brahminical pioussness and scholarship at a time when Brahmins still had significant political and economic roles to play. Yet, with changing realities and the growing influence of colonial powers, Brahminical literature needed to actively contribute to perpetuating its own image in the very social context in which it had appeared.

In effect, the messenger poetry of Kerala became a panegyric to an idealised, bucolic, Brahmin-centred society and way of life. The 'boom' in *sandēśakāvya*s that appeared in medieval Kerala could have been part of the program of projecting a romanticised past onto an uncertain and precarious present. In a land that was fragmented politically, the soft power wielded by literature defined and bound communities. It comes as no surprise that the classic messenger poem model was found to be particularly useful for this purpose—after all, by default the format gives prime position to 'figuring space.'

It is interesting to note that history corroborates this literary description of the Brahmins' influence and it seems that the poetic images painted in Keralan messenger poems are not always hyperbolic, though they may seem wistful in light of their historical background. In these poems, as in real life, Kerala had indeed functioned as the cognitive region of *brahma-*

kṣetra/brāhmakṣatra—the land over which Brahmins had the sanctioned right to rule. The messenger poems were instrumental in both projecting, up-keeping and, eventually, attempting to maintain vestiges of this status quo.

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Murāri's aerial view of India: Searching for historical clues in the *Anargharāghava*

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1. *Introduction*

Unlike religious texts, which are deliberately anonymous, try to appear timeless, and manage to eliminate almost all historical references, Sanskrit poetic compositions usually have a named author and admit the fact that they were produced at a certain, historically definable time and place. This is also the case with the *Anargharāghava* ('Rāma Beyond Price') of Murāri,¹ which is a 'poem to be seen' (*drśyakāvya*), i.e. a play, putting on stage the story of what is considered the first ever poem (*ādikāvya*) according to the tradition, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Since the subject is a mythological one, the play cannot be expected to abound in historical references. There is nevertheless one event in the story that is more likely to be of some historical interest: the flight of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa from Laṅkā back to Rāma's hometown, Ayodhyā. The protagonists take the magic aerial chariot Rāvaṇa has stolen from his own brother, Kubera; and while flying back, they have a bird's eye view of the geography of the subcontinent from Laṅkā to Rāma's capital. The point of the whole flight is of course not to give us a geographic description, but to allow the playwright to insert a long series of poems in the old tradition of *dūta*- or *saṃdeśa-kāvya*s, messenger poems. Such works have included, ever

¹ For an overview of the editions, see Törzsök 2006, 26ff. This edition has been used for all citations and references.

since Kālidāsa's 'Cloud Messenger' (*Meghadūta*), the description of the places the messenger must go through to deliver the message of the pining lover to his beloved. Here the difference is that the dominant feeling is not related to *viraha* or the separation of the lovers, but rather to the triumph of the hero, who remembers his adventures at various places. It is also an occasion for the playwright to go through the key events in the play once again and to remind us of the various sentiments the hero experienced.

Before looking at the details, it must be mentioned that Murāri was certainly inspired by Bhavabhūti's 'Deeds of the Great Hero' (*Mahāvīracarita*); and the *Anargharāghava* owes many ideas to the *Mahāvīracarita*, without being a mere imitation of Bhavabhūti's work. The idea of the flight might well have been Bhavabhūti's too, but the last act of the *Mahāvīracarita*, in which this event figures, was certainly not written by Bhavabhūti himself in the form in which it has survived. Indeed, it is even possible that the North-Indian poet, Vināyaka, who finished Bhavabhūti's incomplete work, was inspired by Murāri's play when he composed the closing act.

As a preliminary, it must also be emphasised that although some historical clues are certainly to be found in the play, especially concerning its author or its date and place of composition as well as the religious context in which it may have been produced, the *Anargharāghava* does not provide us with a history book of its time. At this point it may also be asked what one can consider to be historical references or a history book. It would certainly be beyond the scope of this paper to define what history is, but in the context of Murāri's work, we can perhaps simply say that we may want to look for whatever is non-fictional or potentially non-fictional in the *Anargharāghava*.

2. The Prologue and Murāri's date

Rather than jumping to the last act of the *Anargharāghava*, which describes the flight, let us see first what can be known from the prologue, which discusses the author's origins and might provide some historical context. As is commonly done in prologues, the poet is named and the context in which the play was composed is hinted at. We thus learn that Murāri is the son of Bhaṭṭa Śrīvardhamāna and Tantumatī, of the *maudgalya gotra*, which betrays the simple fact that he comes from a family of brahmins. More interestingly, the *sūtradhāra* remarks that it is the festivities of the Puruṣottamayātrā that give the occasion for the performance (1.5, p. 48):

*bho bho lavaṇodavelātāmālakandalasya
tribhuvanamaulimaṇḍanamahānīlamanēḥ
kāmālākucakalaśakeliviracitakastūrikāpatrāṅkurasya bhagavataḥ
puruṣottamasya yātrāyām upasthānīyāḥ sabhāsadaḥ!*

Venerable assembly, you must be entertained on the occasion of the festivities of Lord Puruṣottama (*puruṣottamasya yātrāyām*), who is [dark like] the shoots of *tamāla* trees on a seashore, [like] the sapphire decorating the head of the ruler of the three worlds, [like] the lines drawn playfully with musk on Lakṣmī's round breasts.

The darkness of Kṛṣṇa-Puruṣottama compared to dark objects such as the *tamāla* tree is a wide-spread commonplace. However, it is somewhat surprising that in this verse the deep darkness of the *tamāla* is particularly associated with the seashore; for *tamālas* grow almost all over the subcontinent up to an elevation of 1200 metres. This detail might suggest that the play was meant to be performed near the coastal region.

Furthermore, the *sūtradhāra*, who is from the inland region of central India (*madhyadeśīya*)² is said to be a foreigner or stranger (*vaideśika*). This could confirm that the place of composition or performance is indeed nearer to the coast. It has been proposed several times that the Puruṣottama-yātrā mentioned is in fact an early reference to the famous *yātrā* of that name in Purī, which dates to the tenth century.³ This assumption contradicts some of the dates proposed for the play below. But even if there is no such contradiction, the reference is not necessarily to the Purī *yātrā*, for Puruṣottama-yātrās may have been celebrated in other places in the subcontinent, just as numerous *ratha* processions are held in various places even today.⁴

Although there are not many clues in the play itself that could be used to establish its date, it was certainly composed after Bhavabhūti's period, for Bhavabhūti was Murāri's most important model. The play can thus be dated some time from the beginning of the ninth century CE or later. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Murāri lived at the very beginning of the ninth century, for he is allegedly mentioned in a punning allusion in Ratnā-

² One could understand this word to refer to the region of present Madhya Pradesh, but it is more likely to refer more loosely to any inland region as opposed to a coastal one.

³ See for instance Steiner 1997, 9–10 and Shulman 2014, 488, citing von Stietencron 1978.

⁴ For studies on the significance of such processions, see e.g. Jacobsen 2008.

kara's 'Victory of Śiva' (*Haraviṣaya*).⁵ Ratnākara lived during the reign of Cippaṭajayāpīḍa, dated to 837–840. Let us examine this punning allusion (37.167):

*aṅke kunāṭaka ivottamanāyakasya
nāśaṃ kavir vyadhita yasya murārī ittham
ākṛāntakṛtsnabhuṣanaḥ kva gataḥ sa
daityanātho hiraṇyakaśipuḥ saha bandhubhir vaḥ*

Where has that demon king of yours, Hiraṇyakaśipu, who conquered the whole world, gone, together with his relatives? Murārī/Viṣṇu caused his death in this way, on his lap (*aṅke*), like a poet (*kavir iva*) causes the death of his protagonist (*uttamanāyakasya*) in a bad play (*kunāṭake*).

The name Murārī, meaning 'the enemy of [the demon called] Mura,' is the name of Viṣṇu-Narasimha here, who causes Hiraṇyakaśipu's death, but this name is not to be understood as a pun. For the simile hinges on the comparison of Viṣṇu as Narasimha to a poet or a playwright (*kavi*), while Hiraṇyakaśipu is likened to the protagonist (*uttamanāyaka*) and Narasimha's lap to a bad play (*kunāṭaka*). There does not seem to be any reference to the poet Murārī in this comparison. Moreover, no protagonist dies in the *Anargharāghava*, whose main character is Rāma. Rāvaṇa, who indeed dies in the *Anargharāghava*, cannot be qualified as its protagonist. Murārī is therefore nothing else but the name of Viṣṇu here, and it is used as such many other times in the *Haraviṣaya*.⁶

Another attempt to date Murārī (Dasgupta and De 1947, 449–450) evokes a citation in the commentary of the *Daśarūpaka* (on 2.1), which is from the end of the tenth century. It is therefore argued that Murārī may be dated to the end of the ninth or the first half of the tenth century. However, the citation in question is not from the *Anargharāghava* but from Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita* and the commentary does point out this fact, saying that it comes from the same work as the preceding citation (*tatraiva*).⁷

⁵ This was suggested for instance by Keith ([1920] 1956, 225) but Krishnamachariar (1937, 638n3), who also proposes to understand an allusion first, finally expresses some doubt about this reference in a note. Keith himself mentions that Bhattanatha Svamin and Konow were both of the opinion that there was no allusion to Murārī here.

⁶ In e.g. 21.23 or 30.46.

⁷ For the citation itself, see *Mahāvīracarita* 2.37: *rāma rāma nayanābhīrāmātām* [...].

Finally, Krishnamachariar (1937, 638 no. 665) suggests after discussing various dates that Murāri might come from the eleventh century given that Bhoja and Abhinavagupta do not mention him at all, while Maṅkha, Śāradātanaya and the anthology *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya* quote him. Although absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, we shall see that this dating may be corroborated by other details.

3. Place names, provenance, and Māhiṣmatī

Concerning Murāri's provenance, it might be useful to look at place names mentioned during the flight on the Puṣpaka chariot, for one might expect him to mention his provenance.

The first verse gives us a description of Laṅkā and its surroundings. Then the chariot flies up and the travellers see all the mountains of the world: the Himālaya, the mythical Mandara, Kailāsa, and Meru. The Moon is described with sixteen verses, and the whole procedure of zooming out is very much reminiscent of the *Mahāvīracarita*, in which the same zooming out and back in can be observed. Flying down again, they see Agastya's home (Rohaṇagiri), then Siṃhaladvīpa (the island of the Sinhalese, which is always perceived of as distinct from Laṅkā), the river Tāmraparṇī, the Malaya mountain, the Pañcavaṭī forest (with Rāma reminiscing), the Prasraṇa mountain (again with Rāma recalling his memories), the Godāvarī, the city of Kuṇḍina in Mahārāṣṭra, Andhra with Śiva, Kāñcī in Drāviḍamaṇḍala, Ujjayinī with Śiva as Mahākāla, the city of Māhiṣmatī of the K(h)alacurīs, the Yamunā, the Gaṅgā, Vārāṇasī, the city of Mithilā, the city of Campā, capital of the Gauḍas, Prayāga, the river Sarayū, and finally the city of Ayodhyā. There are eight cities mentioned by name (Kuṇḍina, Kāñcī, Ujjayinī, Māhiṣmatī, Vārāṇasī, Mithilā, Campā, and Prayāga), but these are either famous sacred places (such as Benares) or cities that poets mention by convention (such as Kāñcī). One city name nonetheless stands out, with the ruling dynasty also named: Māhiṣmatī. Māhiṣmatī was a capital up to the eighth century of the Kalacuris mentioned by Murāri as the ruling dynasty there, and this might give us both a date and a place to fix our author. However, it seems that the mention of Māhiṣmatī is also a poetic convention, for it is mentioned already in the epic as Arjuna Kārtavīrya's capital.⁸ Later Rājaśekhara refers to it as the Kalacuri capital in his *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (3.35) sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century,

⁸ See e.g. *Mahābhārata* 13.137.3.

when that dynasty had long been gone. Moreover, the historically identifiable Māhiṣmatī of the Kalacuris would certainly fall into the landlocked midland territory of *madhyadeśa*, which cannot be the place of origin of the play as the Prologue shows: the director from *madhyadeśa* is said to be a foreigner.

Having excluded all these possibilities of date and provenance, it might be more useful to see what general tendencies one might identify in these verses about Murāri's India.

4. *A striking detail*

One detail that might strike any reader is the numerous stanzas in Act 7 on Śiva. In fact, in this sequence of well over a hundred verses, there is only one single verse on Viṣṇu (7.14), whose presence is thus hardly perceptible. Nineteen verses are about Śiva (not counting verses on the moon or on the Gaṅgā, which usually also mention him): on his destructive third eye (30, 31) and the burning of the god of Love (112, 113), on his half man, half woman appearance (32, 33, 36, 39), on his marriage with Pārvatī (34, 35), on his crescent moon (51, 53), on his being worshipped by all (49), on his living in Benares (120, 122) and on his dance (103, 104, 105, 111). The places associated with Śiva are the Himālaya, Kailāsa, Vārāṇasī, the river Gaṅgā, Ujjain, and Andhra. One could say that this is just what one might expect in the period of Murāri, because no matter which date we accept, he lived in the *śaiva* age,⁹ and it is therefore more likely that his landscape included more *śaiva* temples and images than *vaiṣṇava* ones. But it is not only a question of numbers. There is also a particular verse in which both gods figure and which makes it clear that Viṣṇu is seen as subordinated to Śiva, who uses Viṣṇu as an arrow. This verse describes a rather unusual image, and it has been very popular with anthologists:¹⁰

*bāṇibhūtapurāṇapūruṣadbṛtipratyāśayā dhāvite
vidrāṭikṣaṇajāśusūkṣaṇikanaklānte śakunteśvare
namronnamrabhujamgapuṃgavagunavyākṛṣṭabāṇāsana-
kṣiptāstrasya puradruho vijayate saṃdhānasimā śramah*

⁹ I use the expression borrowed from Sanderson 2009.

¹⁰ It is included in the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥ* (31), in the *Sūktimuktāvālī* (*Namaskāra-paddhati* 4), and the *Saduktikarnāmṛta* (74).

When Nārāyaṇa became an arrow for Śiva's bow (*bāṇibhūtapurāṇapūruṣa*), the Lord of Birds [Garuḍa] (*śakunteśvare*), [first] rushed there (*dhāvīte*) hoping to hold him (*dhṛtipratyāśayā*), but recoiled (*vidrāti*) when the fire sparkles from Śiva's third eye hurt him (*ikṣaṇajāśūsukṣaṇikaṇaklānte*). [As the bird approached and then left,] the King of Snakes (*bhujamṅgapuṅga-va*), who formed the string (*guṇa*) [on Śiva's bow], first bent himself (*namra*) [in fear of the bird] and then straightened up (*unnamra*), thus drawing the bow (*vyākṛṣṭabāṇāsana*), which sent out its arrow (*kṣiptāstrasya*). Śiva's effort (*puradrūho śramaḥ*), which was only to put the arrow on the bow (*saṃdhānasīmā*) [to destroy the demon cities], conquers [all] (*vijayate*).

The idea that Śiva uses Viṣṇu as an arrow is of course very old and goes back to at least the *Taittirīyasamhitā* (6.2.3.1–2), according to which Rudra has an arrow made of Soma, Agni and Viṣṇu to destroy the three cities of the *asuras*. In the play, the distribution of the gods is different, for Agni is in Śiva's third eye and Soma is the moon on his head, while both Viṣṇu and Garuḍa are instrumentalised. Using a conspicuously Vedic word for fire *āśūsukṣaṇi*, Murāri perhaps not only shows off his knowledge of Vedic literature but might indicate that he consciously rewrites the Vedic myth.

This verse and the overwhelming presence of Śiva in Murāri's landscape are not the only *śaiva* elements in the play. Two other motifs are worth mentioning in this context.¹¹ One is Paraśurāma's insistence that Rāma lacked respect toward Śiva when he broke Śiva's bow, and since Paraśurāma is Śiva's disciple, he must punish Rāma for this. Although this motif occurs elsewhere too,¹² the *Anargharāghava* devotes a particularly large number of verses to this subject and to Paraśurāma's being Śiva's disciple.¹³ Another one is present throughout the play due to Rāvaṇa's key role: it is Rāvaṇa's unparalleled devotion to Śiva, in particular the offering of his heads to the god.¹⁴ Taken together, these elements suggest that Murāri was himself *śaiva*,¹⁵ or at least likely to have worked in a *śaiva* court.

¹¹ To analyse these motifs in detail would be beyond the scope of this paper, but both of them are quite conspicuous.

¹² In Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita*, in five stanzas (2.17, 2.28, 2.33, 3.6 and 3.37).

¹³ There are ten or eleven stanzas including a reference made by Rāma to Paraśurāma as Śiva's disciple (at 4.62, 4.80, [4.85] 4.87, 4.99, 4.115, 4.125, 4.129, 4.153, 4.163, 4.165 in Törzsök 2006).

¹⁴ The *Mahāvīracarita* seems to have only one stanza on this (6.14), which may not be Bhavabhūti's (as is the case with the end of the play from 5.46), while the *Anargharāghava* has at least six (at 3.145, 3.179, 5.122, 6.159, 6.176, and 6.187 in Törzsök 2006). Note that at 6.151 the offering is said to be made for Brahmā.

¹⁵ This may be the case in spite of Murāri's *vaiṣṇava* name, his reference to the Pu-

5. Andhra

Another striking feature of the flight verses is the strong presence of Andhra. Amid conventionally described or sacred places, Andhra stands out, for it is neither among such commonly evoked places as Kāñcī nor a sacred place such as Vārāṇasī.¹⁶ The Andhra verses are introduced by Vibhīṣaṇa (7.247), who appears to know the region so well as to refer to the seven branches of the Godāvārī through which the river reaches the sea:¹⁷

*Vibhīṣaṇaḥ (dakṣiṇato darśayan):
deva, praṇamyatām ayam andhraviṣayalakṣmyāḥ
saptagodāvarahārakalāpaikanāyako bhagavān bhīmeśvaraḥ.*

Vibhīṣaṇa (showing something on the right):

Your Majesty, here is the central gem of the sevenfold necklace formed by the Godāvārī River (*saptagodāvarahārakalāpa*), worn by the Goddess of Wealth in the region of Andhra (*andhraviṣayalakṣmyāḥ*): the terrifying god Śiva (*bhagavān bhīmeśvaraḥ*). Let us bow down to him.

Vibhīṣaṇa associates a frightening form of Śiva with this region and the subsequent verses indeed describe various terrifying forms of the god. He is mostly invoked as dancing his terrifying dance at the end of the world, such as in this verse, whose image is at the same time also comical (7.252):

*krīḍānāṭasya pralayāndhakāraiḥ kaṇṭhe nīpīte tava, kālakaṇṭha
prthag kabandham, prthag uttamāṅgaṃ nṛtyad bhayād aikṣata kālārātriḥ*

ruṣottama-yātrā and the *vaiṣṇava* invocatory verses. The invocatory verses are easily explicable: a Rāma play should invoke Viṣṇu at the beginning. In the same way, the occasion of the Puruṣottama-yātrā is well-suited for a Rāma play. Authors sometimes do have names that do not reflect their religious affiliation, such as the famous Kashmirian dualist *śaīva* authors, Rāmakaṇṭha and Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha.

¹⁶ Let us note that the flight in the *Mahāvīracarita* includes fewer place names and is altogether much shorter than in the *Anargharāghava*. It basically recalls only the places visited by Rāma.

¹⁷ The region or the seven branches are called Saptagodāvārī even today, although the area is more commonly designated as the Konaseema region. See for instance Wikipedia under Godavari.

O Black-necked Shiva (*kālakaṇṭha*), your [black] neck was hidden (*nīpīte*) by the darkness of the end of the world when you were dancing playfully (*kriḍānaṭasya*), and the [goddess called the] Night of Universal Destruction (*kālarātriḥ*) was looking at your separately dancing head and body with fear.

One of the verses gives a particularly precise description of Bhairava's iconographic details (7.248):

tatkālārabhaṭīvijṛmbhaṇaparitrāsād iva bhraśyatā
vāmārdhena tad ekaśeṣacaraṇaṃ bibhrad vapur bhairavam
tulyaṃ cāsthibhujagaṅgabhūṣaṇaṃ asau bhogīndrakaṅkālakaiḥ
bibhrāṇaḥ parameśvaro vijayate kalpāntakarmāntikaḥ

His left [female] half is gone (*bhraśyatā*) during his violent dance at that time [when the world ends] (*tatkālārabhaṭī*),¹⁸ for it seems to be frightened by how much he expands. That terrifying body of his—wearing equally frightening (*tulyaṃ*) bones and snakes as ornaments (*asthibhujagaṅgabhūṣaṇaṃ*), together with the Serpent King (*bhogīndra*) and skeletons/corpses (*kaṅkālakaiḥ*)—is left with only one leg (*ekaśeṣacaraṇaṃ bibhrad*).¹⁹ This great lord who brings about the end of each aeon is ever victorious!

Śiva has only one leg here, explained as a result of his female half having left. He has bones, skeletons, serpents, and the Snake king as ornaments. This is a precious piece of information, for one-legged depictions of Śiva are not ubiquitous in India: they are mostly to be found in Odisha, with some examples also known from the Tamil South. However, the South-Indian iconography of one-legged Śiva is very particular: it is in fact a *trimūrti* form, in which Viṣṇu and Brahmā emerge from Śiva's body. In addition to snakes and skulls, many images have Śiva's common emblem, the trident. Moreover, perhaps because it may be challenging to represent a one-legged Bhairava

¹⁸ For the term *ārabhaṭī*, see the commentary of Viṣṇubhaṭṭa, explaining it as a particular frightening dance form: *ārabhaṭī=raudrarasābbhṛcyañjikā vṛttiḥ; ārabhaṭītyanena tatpradhānaṃ nṛttaṃ lakṣyate; tatkāle=mahāpralaye, ārabhaṭīśabdena tad-vṛttipradhānaṃ tāṇḍavākhyam nṛttaṃ lakṣyate*.

¹⁹ In this compound, Murāri managed to include a grammatical term, *ekaśeṣa*, although not in the technical meaning (for which see *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.2.64). Such learned allusions to grammar and other branches of knowledge are quite frequent in the *Anargharāghava*. For an analysis of theatrical terms alluded to, see Törzsök 2012.

dancing, the figure often holds the hour-glass shaped *ḍamaru* drum, a sign of Śiva's dance at the end of the world.

6. One-legged Śiva-Bhairava from Odisha and Andhra

The development of the iconography of one-legged Śiva images in Odisha and neighbouring Andhra was outlined in detail in a study by Thomas Donaldson (1982). What follows is a summary of some of these developments identified by him that might be of importance in determining the date of the image described by Murāri.²⁰

In earlier images of one-legged Śiva, dating from the eighth century, the god does not appear to be frightening. He often carries a rosary and a trident in his two upper hands, while holding an ascetic's water jar and showing the gesture of generosity (*varada*) with his lower hands. He wears jewels: armlets, earrings, a girdle etc. He is often depicted with devotees, but there are no snakes or bones to be seen anywhere. Two images from Bhubaneswar (from the Tāleśvara and Śiśireśvara temples) in Donaldson's study may illustrate this type of image (Donaldson's fig. 1 and 3).²¹

The ninth century seems to witness an important change, namely the appearance of snake ornaments. The trident is still there, and the rosary may also be present or replaced by a citron. But the jewels are all replaced by snakes in the form of armbands, bracelets, and the anklet (a single one on the one leg). The sacred thread can also be made of a snake, as the image from Mallikeśvara temple in Paikapada shows (from the late ninth century, Donaldson's fig. 6). In the Dakṣiṇeśvara temple in Badgaon (mid-ninth century, Donaldson's fig. 5),²² the one-legged image also holds a huge snake, which might correspond to the King of Snakes mentioned by Murāri in the verse (*bhogīndra*).

The iconography of Ekapāda Bhairava underwent some further changes in the tenth century. While the snake ornaments remain, he is also decorated with a garland of skulls as the Kuṇḍeśvara image and the one in Hirapur

²⁰ An unpublished paper by Shaman Hatley ('Ekapādabhairava of Ekāmra: In Search of a One-legged God') also contains an important iconographic investigation, in particular concerning the early history of *ekapāda* images.

²¹ Accessible online on the 17th December 2024:

<https://archive.org/details/arsorient121419811984univ/page/160/mode/2up>

²² Accessible online on the 17th December 2024:

<https://archive.org/details/arsorient121419811984univ/page/162/mode/2up>

show (Donaldson's fig. 14,²³ see also fig. 1 at the end of this paper). Sometimes he also holds a skull cup (difficult to see on the images).²⁴ Furthermore, as the Kuṇḍeśvara image shows (Donaldson's fig. 15), sometimes there is a lying corpse underneath the idol, which stands on a double lotus. In this representation the *damaru* is among the hand-held attributes, possibly indicating Śiva's dance. Although no single image corresponds exactly to Murāri's *ekapāda* Śiva, the elements he mentions, or very similar elements, can all be found on images: ornaments made of skulls for bone ornaments, snakes for jewels, the large snake held in his hand as the Snake King and the corpse underneath for the skeleton or the dead body.

While all these images come from Odisha, similar *ekapāda* idols were also found in the neighbouring territories of northern Andhra (see, for instance, Linda 1990 on Nārāyaṇapura). The iconography is more conservative here in the tenth century: the attributes may include the trident and the rosary of the earlier images, and the iconography often lags behind that of Odishan Bhairavas, who are more ferocious at this time, but some Ekapādas may still carry a skull cup in the hand (Linda's pl. 27).

One Andhra image, found in the Someśvara temple of Mukhalingam from the tenth century (Donaldson's fig. 13), which carries the trident and the rosary, also holds a big snake, corresponding roughly to the ninth century iconography of Odisha and recalling Murāri's King of Snakes.

A particularity of this last representation is that above the figure of Ekapāda, the image of a terrifying emaciated goddess is found in a niche, sitting on a corpse. While such a figure could be Cāmuṇḍā or any other frightening goddess, it is also possible that she is Kālārātri mentioned in one of Murāri's verses cited above, who looks at Bhairava's dance at the end of the world.

From the distribution of the images and their presence in Andhra, albeit with a more conservative iconography, I propose that Murāri's Ekapāda, whose features can be found on tenth century images in Odisha, may correspond to the (late?) tenth or, possibly, early eleventh century in Andhra. It seems much more likely that he was from Andhra, for he mentions that region in a prominent place in the description of India and because if he were from Odisha, it is less likely that he would take the Ekapāda figure as representative of Andhra and, in particular, of the Godāvarī delta.

²³ Accessible online on the 17th December 2024:

<https://archive.org/details/arsorient121419811984univ/page/164/mode/2up>

²⁴ This seems to be the case on an image published as plate 27 of the *Nilakaṇṭheśvara deul* in Linda 1990, 232–262.

Ekapāda as a form of Bhairava nonetheless seems to go back to an earlier *śaiva* textual history. Ekapāda is a common name of Śiva, and Bhairava type Ekapādas are mentioned in tantric texts of the seventh or early eighth centuries such as the *Brahmayāmala*²⁵ or the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*,²⁶ both of which might come from east India. These texts, however, do not give any iconography, apart from general *śaiva* features like the three eyes, and Ekapāda is not supposed to be represented in any form other than mantric. The prescriptions concern his basic visualisation for internal worship, without giving any iconometrical references.

Although the above dating and Murāri's provenance are tentatively suggested here, the date of the eleventh century also corresponds to Krishnamachariar's proposal based on external sources.

7. Hypothetic conclusions

If the region of northern Andhra possibly extending to southern Odisha is where Murāri likely came from, and if his approximate date is the tenth-eleventh centuries, there are still several kingdoms in which he might have worked.

One possibility is that the kingdom in question was smaller or south Kalinga, which was ruled from the seventh to the tenth century by the early eastern Ganga dynasty. They were Śaivas, with a capital in Mukhalingam also called Kaliṅganagara. They considered themselves to belong to the lunar dynasty (*candravaṃśa*), which might also explain the large number of verses praising the moon. This possibility was also suggested by Shulman 2014 on the basis of the *śaiva* temples mentioned: 'Murāri's awareness of the somewhat parochial *śaiva* sites in the Godāvārī region supports the argument for an eastern, probably Kaliṅgan provenance.'²⁷

²⁵ *Brahmayāmala* according to Shaman Hatley's transcription (3.113): *ekapādaṃ mahāvīraṃ bhairavākārasaṃjakam*. This Bhairava is said to be the seed syllable Jhaṃ or Jhuṃ and to have three eyes.

²⁶ *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* ch. 26 also describes him as having three eyes. He is the syllable Jhuṃ residing in the heart. Since the letter Jha in Gupta script looks like a man with his arms raised, he is also called *ūrdhvabāhu* here and *ūrdhvabasta* in *Kālottara* T59, which lists among his occasional features having one eye or one arm.

²⁷ It is however unclear what dating Shulman 2014 prefers, for he takes the *Daśarūpaka* references to be genuine (which would place Murāri earlier than the late tenth century), but later argues that the mention of the Puruṣottama-yātrā supports a

A more precise hypothesis is that Murāri might have worked under or just after the eastern Chalukyan king Bhīma, who erected the Bhīmeśvara temple in D(r)aksharama between the ninth and tenth centuries.²⁸ The big Maṇḍapam of the temple was built by Gaṅgā Mahādevī, daughter-in-law of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty king Narasiṃha Deva I of Odisha. This temple has a water tank called Saptagodāvarī, apparently because the seven sages (*saptarṣi*) are said to have brought waters from seven different rivers to create it. This might be referred to in the play as Saptagodāvara and the image or *liṅga* of the temple is also mentioned as Bhīmeśvara, both names occurring in Vibhīṣaṇa's introductory speech to Andhra.

Yet another candidate for the ruling king is Aniyāṅkabhīma or Vajrahasta IV (980–1015), who also built a temple at the beginning of the eleventh century at Mukhaliṅgam again with the name mentioned by Vibhīṣaṇa: the Bhīmeśvara temple.

There are certainly yet other local rulers we know nothing about today, but the above listed ones show that the region was no doubt dominated by *śaiva* kingdoms, among which one might well have been Murāri's own, with a king who perhaps built a Bhīmeśvara temple. Whoever the ruler or the ruling dynasty was during Murāri's time and at his place, he must certainly have worked in a *śaiva* court in northern coastal Andhra (with a close relation to southern coastal Odisha), may well have been himself a *śaiva*, and his period of activity was most likely around the (late?) tenth or (early?) eleventh century.

8. General remarks

Finally, a few general remarks concerning *kāvya* and historicity may be of interest, as a general conclusion of the above investigations.

First, it may well be the least historical looking details that may sometimes provide the most historical clues. In other words, while Māhiṣmatī appears to refer to an existing historical capital, it is mentioned by convention in the *Anargharāghava*. At the same time, some details of religious history such as the Śiva forms associated with Andhra may give historical clues. While this seems paradoxical, given that divine manifestations were thought to be eternal and unchanging, it is precisely for that reason that they may

date after the building of the first temple in Purī, i.e. after 949–959.

²⁸ It is believed to have been constructed earlier than the Bhīmeśvarasvāmī temple in Samarla Kota (Samalkot), which was built between 892 CE and 922 CE.

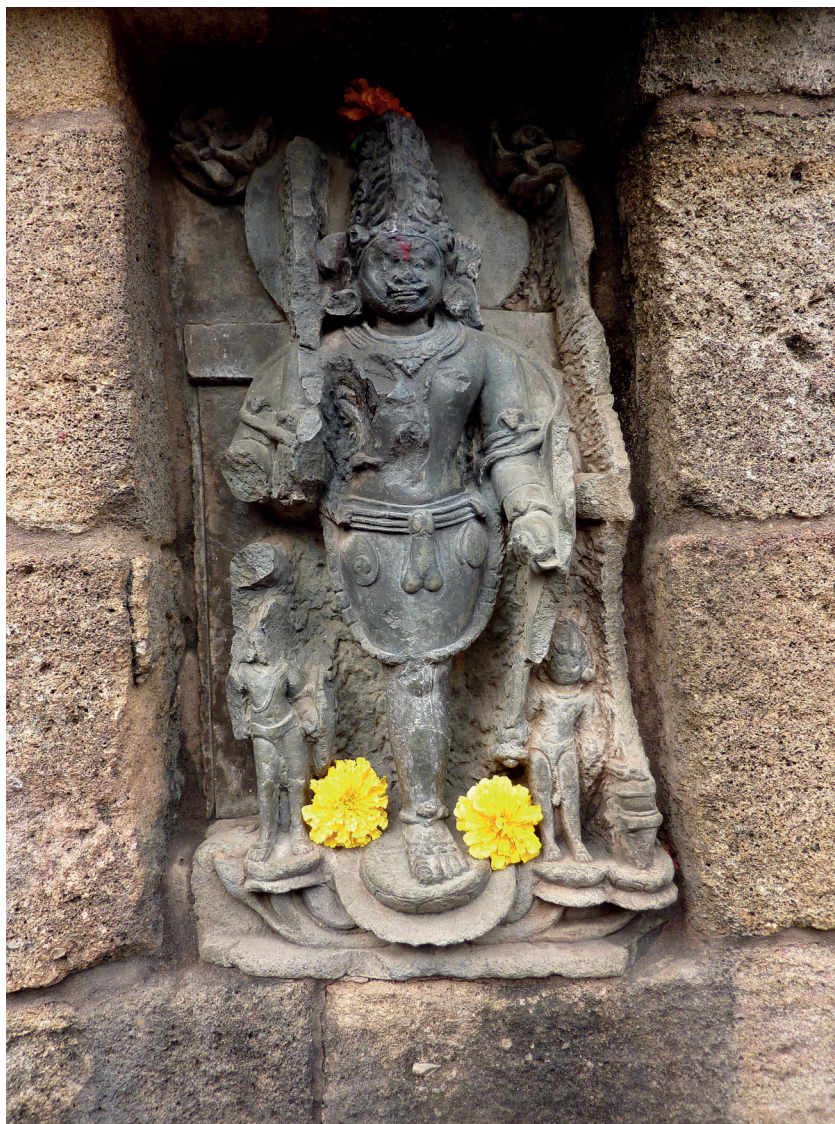


Fig. 1. Ekapāda at the Hirapur yoginī temple. Photograph courtesy Shaman Hatley

contain historical clues, for authors were not aware of their historically determined nature.

Second, although historical changes were traditionally negated in the Indian tradition, since authors often tried to place their work in a timeless or mythical past (despite the historical references of prologues in dramas), regional variations were acceptable and accepted. Some of these regional variations were of course conventional, such as the well-known idea that Keralan women have curly hair, but others, such as the one-legged Bhairava being a particularity of Andhra (apart from Odisha) were anchored in some historically provable fact.

Finally, although our conclusions may only be tentative, certain hypotheses are more plausible than others, particularly when several details point to the same or similar conclusions. In other words, when we are on shaky grounds because there are no hard-and-fast historical facts mentioned in a piece of *kāvya*, it is the cumulative evidence of several details that may provide us with a relatively plausible solution.

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Khmer history through *kāvya*?
An edition and translation of K. 1236 (763 CE)
of the reign of Jayavarman I *bis*.

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It is fitting that a volume on history through Sanskrit poetry should contain at least one contribution concerning a part of the world for which *kāvya* is arguably the principal source for about eight centuries of history. Between the sixth and thirteenth centuries in Cambodia, the only locally produced written sources that survive to this day are those of a corpus of some 1600 inscriptions, mostly on stone, in Sanskrit or Khmer or both. Not all of this is poetry, for the portions in Khmer are mostly in workaday prose, dealing typically with legal and administrative matters and thus containing voluminous lists of goods and property. Parts of some Sanskrit inscriptions too are little more than versified lists or short prosaic accounts of donations and arrangements made, usually at the moment of the establishment of a foundation.¹ But the texts in Sanskrit typically blossom with rhetoric in praise of

* I am grateful to the organisers for the memorably stimulating event that they convened in Bologna in the context of the SHIVADHARMA Project. I should mention also that this article includes work conducted in the framework of the DHARMA project (ERC Synergy Grant no. 809994). I thank Harunaga Isaacson for several last-minute corrections and improving suggestions, and I thank Kunthea Chhom for most generously sending me her translation, included below, of the lacunose and therefore difficult Khmer portion of K. 1236.

¹ Cf. Estève and Soutif 2023, 26.

the deities whose installations and endowments they record and with praise of the kings and dignitaries who presided over such acts of pious generosity.

Orotund eulogies in Sanskrit can seem hollow and repetitive, making every figure praised into a paragon of virtues seemingly devoid of individual characteristics and achievements. This has led several scholars to express occasional impatience with the deficiencies of these documents as historical sources.² Nonetheless, a very large amount of what we do know about Khmer history—the names and interrelations of its kings and religious personalities, the nature of its changing religious practices, the thought-world and the ethos of its society—we know about through the filter of Sanskrit *kāvya*.

Some earlier scholars seem to speak of extracting faint traces of truth with difficulty from passages of flowery hyperbole, the poetry being as much an obstacle as an aid to understanding the kinds of information they regarded as historical facts.³ In this paper, a few instances will be presented of the kinds of information that can be drawn specifically from magniloquent passages in high *kāvya* style, in other words from the sorts of passages that are sometimes dismissed as void of historical significance. Since I have recently discussed *kāvya* and its relationship with Khmer historiography in a synthesising article that draws on a range of inscriptions ('Kālidāsa's Kingship among the Khmers,' Goodall 2023), I will instead attempt to treat the topic here by presenting the literary tropes, echoes and allusions of just one document, a remarkable eighth-century inscription now housed in a ruined North-facing sanctuary (IK 4.03, in the site-numeration based on that of Lajonquière 1902–1911) that Henri Mauger (1937, 240) called Prāsāt Kōmpul Tà Ñon, near Phnom Bayang, in the South of Khmer-speaking territory. In his short description of the site, Mauger does not mention the inscription, which was found decades later nearby and may not have belonged to that sanctuary (see Goodall 2015, 70–73). According to the brief account given by Bruguier and Lacroix (2009, 152–154), the inscription

² I am thinking here of remarks in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship like those of Bergaigne (1885, 556) quoted in Gerschheimer and Goodall 2014, 125: 'Tous les rois ont "les ongles des orteils illuminés par le reflet des pierreries qui étincellent sur les diadèmes de leurs vassaux prosternés devant eux"; il ne faudrait pas se hâter d'en conclure que nul d'entre eux n'ait eu à défendre sa couronne contre quelque gouverneur auquel il aurait pris fantaisie de relever la tête.' Vickery too is inclined to regard the Sanskrit sources unfavourably, but primarily, it seems, on the grounds that he found them less informative about social and economic history than what is written in Old Khmer (see, for example, Vickery 1996, 389–390 and 1998, 6).

³ See, for instance, Finot 1925, quoted by Goodall 2023, 57.

came to light in 1997, when the site was tidied and landscaped by locals (see their photo 127 on p. 153), before being covered over again by vegetation by 2003 (see their photo 128 on p. 153).

Although couched in the idiom of fine *kāvya*, this is a document that even historians with little patience with poetry should not disparage. Indeed it has already been used to help settle a long doubtful question of regnal history (Goodall 2015, 74–76), and also as a marker of a major religious shift reaching Khmer-speaking territory from the Indian subcontinent (Goodall 2015, 77–78, Goodall and Griffiths 2013, 438). Furthermore, remarks have been made about the evidence the inscription furnishes of a shift in Indian poetic taste reaching Khmer poets (Goodall 2015, 78–80). It is also replete with word-play and ideas that are plainly intended to recall a variety of Sanskrit works from the Indian subcontinent, which makes it a testimony to the circulation of particular works of literature that we might not otherwise know for certain had reached Khmer literary circles at that time.

Part of this inscription has already been published with a French translation (Goodall 2012, reprinted with corrections in 2015), but the entire text has not hitherto appeared in print, for I had long hoped to publish this remarkable epigraph in collaboration with Gerdi Gerschheimer, now retired, just as we had together published another inscription of the same king, Jayavarman I *bis*, namely K. 1254 (Gerschheimer and Goodall 2014). It was Gerdi Gerschheimer who first presented an edition of the text in sessions that I attended of his long-running seminar ‘Corpus des inscriptions khmères’ at the EPHE in Paris, perhaps in 2006, and then again at the University of Vienna on the occasion of a guest lecture that he gave there in 2007, and we subsequently discussed the text together on and off for some years in correspondence. It is therefore essentially Gerdi Gerschheimer’s edition of the text of the inscription that I present below. I have however added in some conjectural restorations, particularly to repair the damaged openings of some stanzas. These I have marked as my own. Gerdi Gerschheimer, being more scrupulously cautious in such matters, would perhaps have resisted including them. This explains why the apparatus to the edition is in French, with occasional additions in English.

After the edition there follows my annotated translation of the Sanskrit, first drafted in 2007 (for the workshop ‘Engraving the King’s Fame’ organised in Pondicherry by Charlotte Schmid), and enriched by the pages of commentary upon it that Gerdi Gerschheimer sent me. Of course the annotation has also subsequently been informed by the comments of other colleagues, acknowledged in the notes below, in particular comments (particularly of Whitney Cox, Csaba Kiss and Judit Törzsök) made on the occasion

of the stimulating conference held in Bologna. The translation of the Khmer portion has been kindly supplied by Kunthea Chhom.

At the end of the article, I shall conclude with a few further remarks about what sorts of historical information can be gleaned from the inscription.

The engraved stele

The stele has been broken into several pieces, two of which survive. Cut through by the break between the two surviving fragments there is a blank line that marks a division of the text: the first part of the inscription, twenty-one lines long, is in Sanskrit verse, and the last nine lines are in Khmer prose (fig. 1). The layout is clear, with each Sanskrit stanza occupying one line of text, punctuated by small horizontal gaps that mark off the quarters, as is usual for Khmer inscriptions, but the execution of the writing is indifferent. This is not a sample of beautiful calligraphy, unlike its contemporary K. 1254 (see figures 4 and 5 in Gerschheimer and Goodall 2014).

Plan of the inscription

The plan of the inscription is fairly classical: praise (*maṅgalācaraṇa*) of a deity or deities—in this case exclusively of Śiva—(stanzas I to VII), panegyric of the reigning king Jayavarman I *bis* (stanzas VIII to XVIII), mention of the act commemorated, namely the creation of a golden statue of the god Jayaikanātha, and the date of that act, namely 685 *śaka* (stanzas XIX to XX). As for metre, stanzas I to XVIII are in *anuṣṭubh*, stanza XIX is in *vilambitagaṭi*, and stanza XX is in *āryā*. In the 27 odd-numbered *anuṣṭubh* *pādas* that are sufficiently preserved for us to be able to judge, there are four *na-vipulās*, in other words just over 14%.⁴

⁴ For a discussion of *vipulās* in a few other Khmer Sanskrit inscriptions, see Goodall 2022, 29–32.

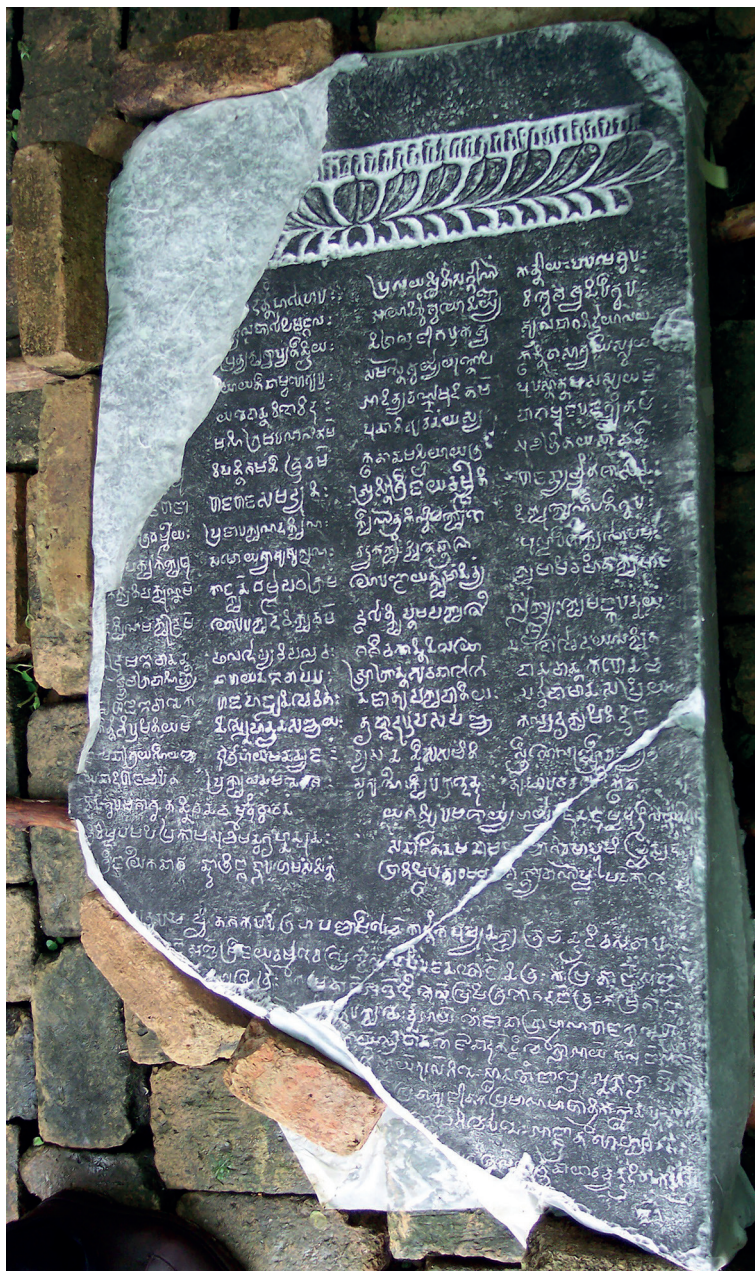


Fig. 1. The inscribed stele K. 1236 in 2015, with an inked estampage still impressed upon it (photographer unknown).

Edition of the inscription

K. 1236/763 (?) (Pr. Kaṃbūl Tā Nan')

I.

(1) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ [jaga]darttiharo haraḥ
pralayasthitisarggāṇāṃ karttā yaḥ parameśvaraḥ ||
b. syllables *jaga*° supplied by DG.

II.

(2) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ [v](y)[ā]lahāro pi maṅgalaḥ
Ayonir vviśvayonir yyo viśveśaś ca nirīśvaraḥ [||]

III.

(3) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ pratyakṣaś cāpy atīndriyaḥ
nidrālur jāgarūkaś ca śūlapāṇir ddayālayaḥ ||
a. Le *pāda* a doit comporter le pronom *yaḥ*.

IV.

(4) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ y[o] yatīnām varo guruḥ
samastaiśvaryyayukto pi kṛttivāsāś ca yas svayam· ||
b. y[o]: seule la partie droite du *o* subsiste sur la pierre.

V. [c. na-vipulā: – – ॐ – ॐ ॐ –]

(5) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ yaṃ vedāntavido viduḥ
Ādityavarṇṇam uditam purastāt tamasaś svayam· ||
d. purastāt: corriger peut-être en *parastāt*? (This suggestion has been followed in the translation.)

VI.

(6) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ maṇibhramaralālitam·
punāti bhuvanaṃ yasya pādāmvujarajaś cyutam· ||
b. bhramara°: le *bb* se distingue mal d'un *g*.

VII.

(7) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ [mṛt](y)uvipattiśamanī dhruvam·
kṛtā namaskriyā yatra sukhatriyayaśādhani ||
a. *mṛt* supplied by DG.

VIII.

(8) ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ (jV) rājā rājarājasamadyutiḥ
Asti śrījayavarmmeti rājanyārccitaśāsanāḥ ||

IX.

(9) ≈ ≈ ≈ [kṣa]tradharmme yaḥ prajārakṣaṇadakṣiṇaḥ
kṣiṇātmaḥkilviṣakṣo(d)o dikṣu kṣoṇipatiśvaraḥ |||]

a. [kṣa]tradharmme: This conjecture was suggested, but not integrated in the text, by Gerdi Gerschheimer on the strength of the alliteration of *kṣ* in this and the following stanzas.

X.

(10) [sākṣād vi]pakṣakakṣe(ṣ)u samo yaś cāśuśukṣaṇeḥ
vaddhakakṣaḥ kṣites trāṇe puṇḍarīkeḥkṣaṇopamaḥ ||

a. syllables *sākṣād vi*° supplied by DG.

a. °kakṣe(ṣ)u: une barre horizontale (qui n'a pas l'air d'être une éraflure) ferme le haut de l'*akṣara* interprété comme un *ṣ*, malgré son dessin peu canonique.

d. puṇḍarīke°: Understand *puṇḍarīke*°.

XI.

(11) [svarlo]k(e) kṣitipakṣuṇṇam kāṇkṣan dharmmapathakramaṃ
yo rañjayat kṣamām nityaṃ kṣamām iva hitakṣamām· ||

a. [svarlo]k(e) conjecturally restored by DG.

XII.

(12) [śaśva](d a)kṣiṇam akṣudram yo rarakṣad avikṣatam·
dūrotkṣiptam apakṣālair llakṣmyāḥ kṣemaṇkaran nayaṃ ||

a. syllables *śaśva*° supplied by DG.

XIII. [c. na-vipulā: ~ - ~ - ~ ~ -]

(13) [kalpa]druma Ivānantaphalado py avipallavaḥ
śaśiva kāntinilayo na doṣodayalakṣitaḥ ||

a. [kalpa]druma: This restitution was conjectured, but not integrated into the text, by Gerdi Gerschheimer.

XIV.

(14) ≈ [śa]ṇkhacakrapāṇir yyo nārāyana Ivāparaḥ
Ākrāntabhuvanābhogo dānavāntakaro na ca ||

a. ≈ [śa]ṇkha°: restituer, selon toute probabilité, *śaśaṇkha*°. Also conceivable, as mentioned in the notes to the translation below, would be to restore [śaśa]ṇkha°.

b. nārāyana: lire *nārāyaṇa*.

XV.

(15) [ha](ṇsa)rāja ivānekarājahaṇsaniṣevitaḥ
na jātu pakṣapātī yaḥ sarvvadā mānasapriyaḥ ||

XVI. [a. na-vipulā: ~ - - - ~ ~ -]

(16) [A](kī)rttir bhirum iti yam· nissnehan dhanasañcayāḥ
tṛṣṇā durupasarpañ ca kalpavṛkṣam iti dvijaḥ [||]

a. bhirum: corr. en °*bhirum* (comme l'exige du reste le rythme d'une *na-vipulā*). Il faut probablement restituer *akīrttir* (cf. K. 81, A, st. XXVIII).

XVII. [c. na-vipulā: ~ ~ - - ~ ~ -]

(17) (do)ṣo nāśrayaṇīyañ ca durgrahaṃ yam ananyajaḥ
vyasanam nīrasam iti strī kolañ (k)rīla(m) [ākḥ]yata ||

d. [ākḥ]yata conjecturally restored by DG.

XVIII.

(18) yenādirājaritaprakṣālanam ane[ka]śaḥ
svagūṇaiḥ kṣīrakundendutuṣāradhava[l](ai)ḥ kṛtaṃ ||

XIX. [vilambitagati: ~ - ~ ~ ~ - ~ - ~ ~ ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ -]

(19) vīnaśvaram aśāśvatan nidhanadharmmi vudhvā dhanam
yaśas sthiram ahāryyam āry(ya)janajuṣṭam unmīlayan· ||

(20) trivīṣṭapam apī prakāmasukham anv agrhnan punaḥ
sanātanam anāma(yaṇ ca) śivam āp(t)um icchan padaṃ ||

Mètre: noter l'absence de césure après la 8^e syllabe (pāda b et c, et même d). As will be seen in the discussion in the notes below, this remark is a clarification that justifies using the label *vilambitagati* instead of the label *prthivī*.

c. agrhnan: lire *agrḥnan*.

XX.

(21) [āryā: - - / ~ - ~ / - - // - - / - - / ~ - ~ / - - / - //
- - / ~ - ~ / ~ - ~ // - - / - - / ~ / - - / -]

[sa] śrījayaikanāthan dvātriṅśadbhārahemasamṣiktaṃ
prātiṣṭhipat parama[yā] (bha)ktyā vāṇāṣṭaṣṭ-śāke ||

c. prātiṣṭhipat: lire *prātiṣṭhipat*.

Dans l'édition de la partie khmère, la cassure est représentée par une barre oblique (/).

(22) {2 à 3 akṣara}C(it)[yu]tt(a)raṣaṭchata śakaparigraha pañcamī roc-
kār[t]/(t)ika puṣyanakṣatra candradivasavāra

{2 à 3 akṣara}C(it)[yu]tt(a)ra°: on peut restituer, sans garantie de certitude absolue, *pañcāṣṭyuttara*°.

(23) {env. 6 akṣara}(ñ)· Añ_ śrī jayavarmmadeva pre l(ña)s/[sa] paura-jana
phoñ· ni vraḥ kamratāñ· 'añ·

{env. 6 akṣara}(ñ)· Añ·: restituer, très probablement, (x) *vraḥ ka(m)mratāñ Añ*·.

l(ña)s/[sa]: cette lecture est donnée sous toute réserve. Si le *l* paraît certain, sa souscrite ressemble assez, sur la plupart des documents, à un *ṭh* préangkorien (grand cercle): il doit

cependant s'agir d'un *ñ*, dont les deux extrémités se rejoignent presque. La consonne qui suit est presque certainement *s*, et ne semble pas porter de virāma. La fracture de la pierre à cet endroit ne permet pas d'exclure que ce *s* ait été accompagné d'un *s* souscrit, dépassant peu sous la ligne d'écriture (cf. la ligature *ssm* dans *nissnehan*, l. 16).

(24) {env. 9 akṣara} x x(ai) vraḥ kamratā(ñ)-/ Añ· dai tel· pre miśrabhoga dañ· vraḥ kamratāñ·

{env. 9 akṣara}: la 1^{re} lettre dont il reste une trace (*x*) est située sous les lettres *ñ· śrī* de la l. 23. x x(ai): la voyelle pourrait bien être *ai*, mais sa graphie serait alors différente de celle de tous les autres *ai* de l'inscription. L'estampage permet de supposer, par exemple, *x nai*.

(25) {n akṣara} x x x / x rak(ṣ)a neḥ v(n)aṃ Āy· voṃ jā nā vrāhmaṇa rājakula rā-

{n akṣara} x x x: les trois akṣara *x x x* dont on voit des traces figurent sous *ḥ kamra* de la l. 24; ils sont donc précédés, probablement, par une douzaine d'akṣara.

(26) / x y· slau pāna voṃ jā nā duk· vñī ce slā Āy· kaṃl(u)ñ· 'a-
x y·: il semble que l'akṣara *x* ne soit pas 'ā.

(27) / Cai Āy· gu(s)· gi neḥ sthāna voṃ jā ple qnak ta kloñ·

(28) C(.) (p)re cāturjātakapramāṇa mähātmika sthāna (ru) x
(p)re: ou bien (s)re?

(29) / C(o)pe gi cerra neḥ Ājñā ta rohha neḥ

C(o)pe: les traces précédant *pe* n'interdisent pas une conjecture *lope*.

(30) / x x (te)l· yā(tta)nā yāvac candradiv(ākara) (|) ||

x x: peut-être *x kV*.

Translation of K. 1236

In the translation below, double square brackets enclose hypothetical reconstructions of the sense of missing portions; single square brackets supply words that smoothen the English syntax and that are implicit in the Sanskrit text. Round brackets enclose the Sanskrit expressions rendered.

1. Hara [[is supreme/may protect you]], who removes suffering [[from the universe]] ([*jaga*]artiharah), the supreme Lord (*parameśvarah*) who (*yah*) is the agent (*kartā*) of dissolution, maintenance and creation (*pralayasthitisargāṇām*);

2. ... auspicious (*maṅgalah*), although (*api*) wreathed in [[snakes]] ([*vyā*]labarah), who (*yah*) is without a source (*ayoniḥ*), [and yet] Source of All (*viśvayoniḥ*), and (*ca*) Lord of All (*viśveśah*) [though] without lord (*nirīśvarah*);

3. and (*ca*) [[who ...]] though (*api*) directly perceptible [[to yogins(?)]]
(... *pratyakṣaḥ*) is beyond the range of the senses (*atīndriyaḥ*); and wakeful
(*jāgarūkaśca*) [though] engaged in [meditative] ‘sleep’ (*nidrāluḥ*); a store of
compassion (*dayālayaḥ*) [though] holding a spike/trident in his hand
(*śūlapāṇiḥ*);

4. [...] who (*yaḥ*) is the best (*varaḥ*) of gurus (*gururḥ*) for ascetics
(*yatinām*) and (*ca*) who (*yaḥ*), although (*api*) endowed with all [the powers
of yogic] sovereignty (*samastaiśvaryayuktaḥ*), himself (*svayam*) wears
[only] a garment of [elephant-]hide (*kṛttivāsāḥ*);

5. whom (*yam*) those who know the final part of the Vedic corpus
(*vedāntaviduḥ*) know (*viduḥ*) [[as that Great Person (*mahāntaṃ pūruṣam*)]]
Himself (*svayam*), risen up (*uditam*) with the colour of the sun
(*ādityavarṇam*), beyond (*parastāt*) darkness (*tamaśaḥ*);

6. the dust of whose lotus-feet (*yasya pādāmvujarajaḥ*), when fallen
(*cyutam*), caressed by bees that are the jewels [[of the headdresses of the gods
headed by Indra ...]] (... *maṇibhramaralālitaḥ*), purifies (*punāti*) the world
(*bhuvanam*);

7. obeisance (*namaskriyā*) performed (*kṛtā*) to whom (*yatra*) certainly
(*dhrūvam*) destroys the calamities of death, [[disease and ageing]] (... *mṛ-
tyuvipattisāmani*) [and] accomplishes the three types of happiness (*sukha-
tritayasādhani*);

8. There is (*asti*) a king (*rājā*), [...], with a radiance equal to that of the
moon (*rājarājasamadyutiḥ*) called Śrī-Jayavarman, whose commands are
venerated by princes (*rajanīyārccitaśāśanaḥ*);

9. who (*yaḥ*) is skilled at protecting his subjects (*prajāraṁśanadaḥ*)
[...] in the duty of [[princes]] (*[kṣa]tradharme*), who is one the dirt of
whose soul’s impurities has been destroyed (*kṣiṇātmaḥ*), the
lord of kings (*kṣaṇīpatiśvaraḥ*) in [every] direction (*dikṣu*);

10. and who (*yaśca*), towards the brushwood of his enemies (*[vi]pa-
kṣakakṣeṣu*), is like (*samaḥ*) fire (*āśusukṣaṇeḥ*) [[incarnate (*sākṣāt*)]]; who,
having his loins girt [in readiness] (*baddhakakṣaḥ*) for protecting (*trāṇe*) the
earth (*kṣiteḥ*), is similar to the Lotus-eyed [Viṣṇu] (*pūṇḍarīkekṣaṇopamaḥ*);

11. who, in desiring (*kāṅkṣan*) to tread the path of duty (*dharmapa-thakramam*), well trodden by [[countless]] kings ([[ane]]*kakṣitipa-kṣuṇṇam*), propitiated (*arañjayat*) Earth (*kṣamām*) daily (*nityam*), as though she were (*iva*) Patience [incarnate] (*kṣamām*), [with the result that she was] capable of [granting] all that is beneficial (*hitakṣamām*);

12. who [[constantly (*śasvat*)] protected (*ararakṣat*) statesmanship (*nayam*), which promotes the safekeeping (*kṣemaṅkaram*) of wealth/glory (*lakṣmyāḥ*) [such that it remained] undiminished (*akṣīnam*), unreduced (*akṣudram*), unwounded (*avikṣatam*), kept far apart (*dūrotkṣiptam*) from blemishes (*apakṣālaiḥ*).

13. Although (*api*) he grants infinite fruits (*anantaphaladaḥ*), like (*iva*) the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpadrumaḥ*),
he is without even a drop of misfortune (*a-vīpal-lavaḥ*)/
[like the tree] which is never without sprouts (*a-vi-pallavaḥ*);
Although a repository of loveliness (*kāntinilayaḥ*), like (*iva*) the moon (*śaśī*),
he is not discerned at the appearance of [every] evening (*na doṣoda-yalakṣitaḥ*)/
he is not characterised by a profusion of faults.

14. He is like (*iva*) a second (*aparaḥ*) Nārāyaṇa, with a conch and discus in/on his hands (*saśaṅkhacakrapāṇiḥ*) bestriding the extent of the earth (*ākṛāntabhuvanābhogaḥ*), and yet (*ca*) who is not the nemesis of demons (*dānavāntakaraḥ*),
[not one whose hands are emptied by giving] (*dāna-vānta-karaḥ*).

15. He is like (*iva*) a prince among swans [/a king among souls] (*haṅsarā-jah*) attended by many Rājahaṅsa birds [/by Rājahaṅsa-like princes] (*rāja-haṅsanīṣevitaḥ*), always yearning for [Lake] Mānasa [/dear to others' hearts] (*mānasapriyaḥ*), [but] never (*na jātu*) flying [/never partisan] (*pakṣapāti*);

16. whom (*yam*) ill-repute (*akīrtiḥ*) considered as ([[ākhyā]]*ta*) fearful (*bhīrum*), riches (*dbhanasañcayaḥ*) as without affection (*niḥsneham*), and desire (*trṣṇā*) as unapproachable (*durupasarpam*), brahmins (*dvijāḥ*) as a wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpavṛkṣam*);

17. and whom error (*doṣaḥ*) [considered] as unsuitable for resorting to (*anāśrayaṇīyam*), infatuation (*ananyajah*) as difficult to possess (*durgraham*), vice (*vyasanam*) as insipid (*nīrasam*), [and] woman (*strī*) as a lusty/frolicsome (*krīlam*) boar (*kolam*);

18. who accomplished (*yena kṛtam*) in many ways (*anekaśaḥ*) the purification of the behaviour of primordial kings (*ādirājacaritaprakṣālanam*) through his virtues (*svaguṇaiḥ*), which were white as milk, jasmine, the moon and snow (*kṣīrakundendutuṣāradhavalaiḥ*).

19. Understanding (*budhvā*) wealth (*dhanam*) to be perishable (*vinaśvaram*), impermanent (*aśāśvatam*), having the nature of something that expires (*nidhana-dharmi*),

Awakening (*unmīlayan*) a renown (*yaśaḥ*) that perdures, that cannot be stolen (*abhāryam*) and that is appreciated by noble folk (*āryajanajuṣṭam*),

Moreover (*anu*) not considering (*agrhaṇan*) even (*api*) [the attainment of] heaven as especially conducive to happiness (*prakāmasukham*), and furthermore (*punaḥ*)

Desiring (*icchan*) to attain (*āptum*) that blessed (*śīvam*) state that is eternal (*sanātanam*) and free from affliction (*anāmayam ca*),

20. ... this [same king] (*saḥ*) established (*prātiṣṭhipat*), with very great (*paramayā*) devotion (*bhaktiyā*) [the divinity] Śrī-Jayaikanātha, cast (*°saṃsiktam*) from thirty-two weight[-units] of gold (*dvātriṃśadbhārahe-ma°*) in the *śaka* year [marked by] [5] arrows, 8 and 6 (*bāṇāṣṭa-ṣaṭ-śāke*).

For the following translation of the Khmer portion, I am grateful to Kunthea Chhom:

(line 22) In the *śaka* year six hundred and eighty-five, fifth day of the dark fortnight, month of Kārttika, lunar mansion of Puṣya, Monday.

(lines 23–25) My Lord Śrī Jayavarman orders Lñassa (or Lñas Sa?) together with townsmen with regard to My Lord ... My Lord, another [god] who was ordered to be co-beneficiary with My Lord ... to protect this temple, [at] this place.

(25–26) It is forbidden that brahmins, members of royal family, ... [at] Slau Pāna.

(26–27) It is forbidden to place flowers, bananas⁵ [and] areca nuts in the precinct of ... all over this place.

⁵ An instance of *ce* for *cek*, as in modern Khmer.

(27–28) It is forbidden that descendants (? *ple*) of the people of Kloñ ...
use Cāturjātakapramāṇa Māhātmika Sthāna ...

(29–30) [Those who] ... rob, transgress this [royal] order as already mentioned ... [suffer] punishment [in hell] as long as the sun and the moon [exist].

Annotation

On stanza 2:

In amongst the theological paradoxes here, the allusion to Śiva being wreathed in snakes and yet auspicious is clearly a conscious echo of *Kumārasambhava* 5:64–65, in which Śiva, disguised as an ascetic in order to test Pārvatī, represents himself to her as an unsuitable husband by adverting to various troublingly inauspicious habits:

*athāha varṇī vidito maheśvaras tadarthinī tvam punar eva vartase
amaṅgalābhyāsarataṁ vicintya taṁ tavānuvṛttiṁ na tu kartum utsahe
avastunirbandhapare kathaṁ nu te karo 'yam ābaddhavivāhakautukaḥ
karena śambhor valayikṛtāhinā sahiṣyate tatprathamāvalambanam*

Then spoke the ascetic: ‘Maheśvara is well known, and yet you yearn for him. Thinking of how he is fond of inauspicious habits, I cannot follow you. You who are intent upon a worthless object, how will this hand of yours, with the nuptial band tied round it, endure the unprecedented clasp of the snake-bangled hand of Śambhu?’

On stanza 3:

As Gerdi Gerschheimer remarks in his apparatus, the lost first *pāda* must have contained the relative pronoun *yaḥ*, but we cannot be certain what else it contained. As for God being perceptible while being beyond the range of the senses, this is an idea that we find expounded, for instance, by the Śaiva theologian Sadyojyotiḥ, whom Sanderson (2006) has dated to 675–725 CE, in *Mokṣakārikā* 109–110b, where the commentator Rāma-kaṇṭha demonstrates that Sadyojyotiḥ is appealing for his authority to the still earlier Saiddhāntika scripture the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha*.⁶ Briefly, godhead is directly perceptible to the purified soul unmediated by the sense-

⁶ The passage is quoted, with corrections to the hitherto printed editions, and with translation, in Goodall 2022b, 337–338.

faculties, because the sense-faculties are evolutes of insentient matter and thus incapable of such perception, whereas the soul's innate nature consists in the twin powers of omnipotence and omniscience.

The qualification *nidrālu* suggests Viṣṇu, who is wakeful even when in magical sleep (*yoganidrā*), rather than Śiva. But no doubt, as Csaba Kiss has suggested, *nidrālu* could be interpreted as *yoganidrāyukta* and applied to Śiva with the sense 'practising yogic meditation' or 'sunk in *samādhi*.' Perhaps the description is meant to suggest that ultimately Viṣṇu is nothing other than a manifestation of Śiva? And perhaps it is also conceivable that the word might refer to the notion that all creatures 'sleep' in Śiva when the universe is resorbed; indeed the word *liṅga* is sometimes explained as meaning 'that into which all things are dissolved,' e.g. in *Vāyavīyasamhitā* 2.27:10–13 (Barois 2012, vol. 3, 253). In that case, we could interpret the word to mean both 'prone to [meditative] sleep' and also 'prone to [induce] sleep [in others].'

On stanza 4:

Although he has attained *aiśvarya*, which must, as Judit Törzsök observed, punningly refer both to temporal power (and therefore wealth), as well as to the eightfold sovereignty of yoga (namely, according to one listing, *aṇimā laghimā prāptiḥ prākāmyam mahimā tathā/ īśitvam vaśitvam ca tathā kāmāvasāyitā*; cf. K. 13, st. 3), Śiva nevertheless chooses to wear the dripping hide of an elephant he has slain (cf. *Kumārasambhava* 5:67) and is therefore described as *kṛttivāsa*. The wording is almost certainly a deliberate echo of the first stanza of Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*:

*ekaiśvare sthito 'pi praṇatabahuphale yaḥ svayam kṛttivāsāḥ
kāntāsammiśradeho 'py aviśayamanasāṁ yaḥ parastād yatīnām
aṣṭābhīr yasya kṛtsnam jagad api tanubhir bibhrato nābhīmānaḥ
sanmārgālokanāya vyapanayatu sa vas tāmasīm vṛttim īśaḥ*

May the Lord remove your state of darkness so that you may perceive the true path—the Lord who, though established in an unique sovereignty that confers many benefits upon his devotees, remains himself clad in an elephant-skin; who, although his body is mixed with that of his beloved, excels ascetics, whose minds do not focus on the objects of the senses; who, though he sustains the whole universe with his eight forms, has no pride.

Given that this is the inspiration, it is conceivable that the missing *pāda* contained another element from the main source. One might for instance

very tentatively reconstruct the first *pāda* thus: [*kāntāsaṃmiśradeho*] *yo*. In that case, there would be an opposition between the first two quarters and we might interpret ‘whose body is intertwined with that of his beloved, [and yet he is] the most excellent among ascetics, the [ultimate] guru.’

On stanza 5:

One could restore the first *pāda* to read, for example, *mahāntam pūruṣam iti*, for this stanza is clearly intended to recall *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 3:8, whose wording it unmistakably echoes:

*vedāham etaṃ puruṣam mahāntam ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt
tam eva viditvāti mṛtyum eti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate 'janāya*

I know this Great Person, sun-coloured, beyond darkness. It is by knowing Him that one goes beyond-Death. There is no other way to go there.

On the strength of the same parallel, we should furthermore understand *purastāt* in the inscription to be the engraver’s error for *parastāt*, which governs the ablative *tamasaḥ*.

On stanza 6:

Emmanuel Francis has drawn our attention to a parallel for the motif of bees compared with crest-jewels in the Kumaraḍimaṅgalam plates of Nandivarman III, 10th regnal year (ca. 856 CE, ed. Ramesan (1976), 193–205 in Subrahmanyam 1976), verse 3:

*abhavad avanipālād adbhutaśrīr amuṣmāt
sakalajanaśaraṇyo daṃtivarṃmā sukarmā
bhayavinatasamastakṣatrasaṃghātacūḍā-
maṇimadbhukarabrṇḍāghrātāpādāravindaḥ*

From this king was born Dantivarman, of prodigious glory, a refuge for all his people, virtuous in his deeds, whose lotus-feet were brushed by swarms of the bees that were the crest-jewels of the crowds of all the kings who prostrated themselves before him in fear.

But there is also a parallel in st. 13 of K. 1254, describing king Jayavarman I *bis* (see Gerschheimer and Goodall 2014, 118, 123). The stanza in question, however, is part of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* praising Śiva, and so the crest-jewels must be those of the headdresses of Indra and the other celestials. There are

so many ways in which this trope might be expressed to fit the missing syllables (for instance *purandarādisikhara*°, for an alliteration of *ra* to suit the following *pāda*) that, although we can diagnose the probable sense, we can offer no restitution that is more likely than all others to have been original.

On stanza 7:

It seems probable that the lost opening *pāda* gave us a triple *dvandva* identifying the three misfortunes (*vipatti*), and it is possible that these corresponded to the three happinesses of the last *pāda*, which we have been unable to identify. Various triads of misfortune are possible, for example *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhidaivika* (in *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 1 as interpreted by Vācaspatiśiṣṛa and other commentators); or aging, disease and death (the three misfortunes that were hidden from the Buddha in his early life); or danger, aging and death, following Vātsyāyana glossing *apavarga* ad *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.22:

*duḥkheṇa janmanātyantam vimuktir apavargah (...) tad abhayaṃ ajaram
amṛtyu padaṃ brahma kṣemaṃprāptir iti.*

Liberation is total deliverance from suffering, [in other words] from [re-] birth. (...) It is brahman, [which is] a state without danger, ageing and death, the attainment of peace.

Similarly, various triads of happiness can be found. Kengo Harimoto, for instance, observed that the *Bhagavadgītā* in 18:36–39 divides *sukha* into *sāttvika*, *rājasa*, and *tāmasa* types, and Whitney Cox pointed out that the *Nāradaṣṭupurāṇa* (1.55:29–30) speaks of a triad consisting of *satputra*, *strī*, and *dhana*. But these do not sound as if they can neatly match a triad of unhappinesses named in the first *pāda* of our verse, the last of which appears to end with a subscript *y* followed by the vowel *u*. The last word is therefore very likely to have been *mṛtyu*.

Now the triad of aging, disease and death occurs also in *Śvetāśvataraṇiṣad* 2:12cd: *na tasya roga na jarā na mṛtyuḥ prāptasya yogāgnimayaṃ śarīram*, ‘He has no disease, no ageing, no death, [being] one who has attained a body that is steeped in Yoga-fire.’ Since the last word of the first *pāda* of our stanza seems to be *mṛtyu*, and since the *Śvetāśvataraṇiṣad* is plainly alluded to in stanza 5, it seems likely that the triad of disease, aging and death was intended here. It could easily have been expressed in the missing syllables, for we could imagine something like the following as the first *pāda*: [*sarvarogajarāmṛt*]yū°.

On stanza 8:

There might seem to be a large gap and thus many possibilities. The poet could, for instance, have made some assertion about the king being of lunar lineage (if indeed he was, for we do not have such information about Jayavarman I bis), since that would have resonated with *pāda* b, as we shall see. What seems nearly certain, however, is that there must have been a co-relative pronoun answering the sequence of relative pronouns referring to Śiva in stanzas 1 through 7. This seems to limit the field of what is conceivable to something that provides a transition from Śiva to the reigning king. A further limiting consideration is that before the word *rājā*, which occupies the last two syllables of *pāda* a, we can plainly discern a *ja* from whose left and upper edges the stone has been worn away. One might therefore be tempted to guess at something like [*tadbhaktānvaya*]*j*[*o*] *rājā*, ‘a king born of a lineage of devotees of that [Śiva],’ or [*tadvatsalo dvi*]*j*[*o*] *rājā*, ‘a devotee of that [Śiva] who was [both] brahmin [and] Kṣatriya/king.’ But the right-most portion of the *ja* before *rājā* is visible and seems not to have had a vowel-marker for *o* or *ā* attached to it. It seems that *ja*, *jam*, *je* or *jai* could have been written, and perhaps *ji* or *jī*, but all other vowels can probably be excluded. On metrical grounds, *ji* and *ja* are unlikely, since either would mean assuming a *ra-vipulā* or a *sa-vipulā* (both rare in *kāvya*). Furthermore, a nominal word ending in *ja* would presumably have to be in compound, and the nominative *rājā* should not be possible at the end of a *tatpuruṣa* compound. Nor can we suppose a verb, such as *rarāja* (nor *reje*), since the main verb (*asti*) appears in the next half-line. It is clear that the possibilities are, after all, limited. Given these constraints, the only idea that has occurred to me is *tadbhaktāḥ kamvuje rājā*, ‘A devotee of that [Śiva], king in Kambuja ...’ But I do not find this plausible as a solution, for the first instances of *kamvuja* occur in the late ninth century. Furthermore, one would expect him to be described as ‘king of the Kamvujas,’ not ‘king in Kamvuja.’⁷

As for *rājarāja*°, it is clear that it does not simply mean ‘king of kings’ in this compound. The commonest use of *rājarāja* appears to be as a name for Kubera, but that sense does not seem suitable here. It makes most sense that the word should refer to ‘the moon,’ which is not a common usage, but it is attested to by a few lexical works, notably the *Viśvaparakāśa* (*rājarājaḥ kubere ’pi sārvaḥkare sudhākare [jāntavarga 31ab, ed. CSS]*), and we find it

⁷ Incidentally, *kamvuje* in the sense of ‘in Kamvuja country’ does occur, twice, in an eleventh-century inscription, namely in K. 1158, stanzas 6 and 15: see Estève 2009, 445, 448.

in an eleventh-century Cambodian inscription of the reign of Sūryavarman I, K. 834, verse 26, where both the moon and Kubera are punningly referred to with the word:

*juṣṭaḥ punyajanair ājīdurjaya jāṅghrinīraje
yo 'jasraṃ nīrajobbaktir arājad rājarājavat*

The translation of Coëdès (*IC* vol. V, 260) reads:

Aimé des gens possédant des mérites [*ou*: aimé des Yakṣa], invincible dans le combat, pratiquant une dévotion sans tache (*nīrajas*) à l'égard des nymphéa (*nīraja*) des pieds d'Aja [*ou*: du bélier], il brillait comme un roi des rois (= Kubera) [*ou*: comme la lune].

On stanza 9:

It is conceivable that the poet's use of the expression *kṣatradharme* is intended to recall to readers' minds *Raghuvamśa* 1:13, in which Dilīpa is likened to the duty of princes made flesh:

*vyūḍhorasko vṛṣaskandbaḥ sālaprāṃśur mahābalaḥ
ātmakarmakṣamaṃ dehaṃ kṣātro dharmā ivāśritaḥ*

His chest was broad, his shoulders were like a bull's, he was tall as a *sāla* tree; it was as if the *dharmā* of warriors had assumed a form fitting for its tasks.⁸

In this and the following verses the alliteration of the harsh sound *kṣ* is presumably intended to suggest fieriness or valour, for see Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* 1:72:

*dīptam ity aparair bhūmnā kṛcchrodyam api badhyate
nyakṣeṇa kṣapitaḥ pakṣaḥ kṣatriyāṇāṃ kṣaṇād iti*

Others often compose what is difficult to pronounce with the intention (*iti*) [of creating an effect of] brilliancy, thus (*iti*): 'The side of the Kṣatriyas was destroyed in an instant by the blind [Dhṛtarāṣṭra].'

But as Judit Törzsök and Whitney Cox both pointed out, there is probably a further function of this particular alliterative pattern. As explained at

⁸ Translation of Dezső, Goodall, Isaacson 2024, 5.

length in Goodall 2012 (reprinted as Goodall 2015), the king's having received *dīkṣā* seems to be alluded to here by the expression *kṣīṇātma-kīlbiṣakṣodaḥ*, 'the dirt of whose soul's impurities has been destroyed,' an expression parallel to *kṣatasakalamalaḥ*, which is used in the allusion to the Pallava king Narasiṃha II's initiation in the inscription engraved around the granite base of what is now known as the Kailāsanātha temple in Kanchipuram (see Goodall 2004, xix n17). In both inscriptions, the allusion to the king's initiation is veiled in such a way as to be comprehensible only to those who know how initiation into the Mantramārga is conceived, but, whereas in the Kanchipuram inscription the presence of the allusion is flagged by the expression *śaivāsiddhāntamārga*, here it is flagged instead by the alliteration, for the very shape of the word *dīkṣā* is suggested as one enunciates the syllables of the verse by the repeated instances of *d* and *kṣa*. Such sound-association is found in a common affective etymology (*nirvacana*) of the word *dīkṣā* that is expressed in many late Śaiva scriptures, but also in various floating verses in early commentaries, and that connects the word with the verbal roots that express 'giving' and 'destroying,' for instance in this quotation:⁹

*dīyate jñānasadbhāvaḥ kṣīyate karmavāsanā
dānakṣapaṇayogyā hi dīkṣā śuddhiḥ kṛtātmanām*

[By initiation] the presence of [the power of] Knowledge is given (*dīyate*) [and] the latent traces of past actions are destroyed (*kṣīyate*), for *dīkṣā*, which is capable of giving and destroying is that which purifies [souls such that they become] perfected souls.

Also¹⁰

*dīyate jñānasadbhāvaḥ kṣīyante paśuvāsanāḥ
dānakṣapaṇasaṃyuktā dīkṣā teneha kīrtitā*

⁹ The tenth-century Kashmirian commentator Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha introduces the verse simply with *uktaṃ ca*, a formula that (in contradistinction, for instance, to *yad ābhuḥ*) he tends to use to introduce quotations of what he considered to be scripture, when expounding 8:1 of the *kriyāpāda* of the *Mṛgendratāntra*.

¹⁰ The verse is quoted (without attribution) in this form, for instance, by Jayaratha *ad Tantrāloka* 1:43.

The presence of [the power of] Knowledge is given (*dīyate*) [and] the latent traces [that are the cause] of being a bound soul are destroyed (*kṣīyante*). It is for this reason (*tena*), given its being connected with giving and destroying, that in this system it is called *dīkṣā*.

We also find an instance of *kṣatadoṣapakṣaḥ* describing Jayavarman I *bis* in K. 1294, attesting once more, as Estève and Soutif remark (2023, 30), to the same fondness for the alliteration of *kṣ*. Perhaps that attribute also alludes obliquely to this king's initiation.

On stanza 10:

The first two syllables of the suppletion of *sākṣād vi°* are suggested by the alliterative pattern in this stanza, which contains six other instances of the sound *kṣ*. The word *sākṣād* also gives a fitting sense. As for the syllable *vi°*, yielding *vīpakṣakakṣeṣu*, this seems likely because enemies (*vīpakṣa*) are conventionally likened to flammable brushwood (*kakṣa*) when confronted with the fiery presence of a heroic king. We may compare stanza 4 of K. 253 N, describing Śūryavarman I (Coedès 1911 mistakenly transcribes: *vīpakṣa-takṣam adhyakṣam avākṣīd* in line 8, but the EFEO estampage n. 485 is clear):

- (7) *nijavīryāniloddhūto dhāmadhūmadhvajo yudhi*
 (8) *vīpakṣakakṣam adhyakṣam adhākṣīd yasya dussahaḥ*

The intolerable smoke-bannered [fire] of whose glory (*dhāmadhūmadhvajaḥ*), fanned by the wind of his own heroism, visibly (*adhyakṣam*) burnt up (*adhākṣīd*) the brushwood of his enemies (*vīpakṣakakṣam*) in battle.

(We shall have occasion to return to K. 253 and Coedès' remarks about it in the conclusion.) Less closely parallel, but also supporting the reconstruction *vīpakṣa°* is an instance of *vīpakṣapakṣa°*, 'the side of the enemies,' in st. 84 of K. 528 (Goodall 2022a, 163), which is in praise of Rājendravarman.

Monier-Williams records *baddhaparikara* and *baddhakakṣya*, but *baddhakakṣa* and *baddhakaccha* ('with loins girt in readiness') also occur. Cf. *Viṣṇudharma* 35:28 (in a passage praising Viṣṇu):

brahmā bhavān viśvasṛg ādikāle viśvasya rūpo 'si tathā viśṛṣṭau
viṣṇuḥ stbitau pālanabaddhakakṣo rudro bhavān saṃharāṇe prajānām

You are Brahmā when he creates all things at the beginning, and you are the shape of everything when creation takes place; [you are] Viṣṇu when he has girt his loins [in readiness] for protecting [the universe] at the time of its maintenance; you are Rudra at the moment of resorption of creatures.

For *baddhakakṣa*, see also Schmidt's *Nachträge* ... (1928, 275) and st. 32 of K. 254 of 1129 CE (1051 *śaka*):

ekārthaśūnyamanasā parakīrttikathāśrutau
vaddhakakṣeṇa dharmārthaṃ tenedaṃ lekhitam vidā (IC vol. III, 180ff.)

In 1051 [*śaka*], this learned person, who had girt his loins in readiness to hear the telling of the praises of others for the sake of Dharma, caused this to be written.¹¹

On stanza 11:

I am most tempted to restore Gerdi Gerschheimer's suggestion [*ane*]k(a)^o in place of the first syllables, a suggestion made in an undated (but older than 31 December 2012) file of characteristic notes:

Rien ne permet de privilégier une conjecture pour le début du paada a : aneka, pūrvaka, etc., conviennent. J'offre un Picon bière à celui qui m'en trouve une avec k.s...

Also possible would be [*svarlo*]k(e), assuming that the path trodden leads to heaven, or, with the same sense, the rarer collocation *dyuloke*, or the even rarer archaising expression *trināke*. Of course it is possible that no heavenly destination was explicitly mentioned (as might arguably be suggested by stanza 19), and that the king merely desired 'to tread a path of Dharma.' In that case some other word would be needed. One might imagine a compound such as *bhūlokakṣitipa*^o, 'kings on earth,' but the element *bhūloka*^o would then seem an empty and pointless qualifier. Alternatively, one could conjecture *bhūloke* and suppose the poet to have intended to speak of the path of Dharma that was well-trodden by previous kings 'here on earth.' But in that case it might seem odd to have 'earth' (*kṣamām*) reappearing in the second half of the stanza as the object of the main verb.

¹¹ Coedès' translation (IC vol. III, 189) differs slightly: '(En l'année marquée) par l'esprit (= 1), le vide (= 0), les (5) objets des sens et un, ce savant, s'étant appliqué à écouter le récit de la renommée d'autrui, a écrit ceci, conformément à la Loi.'

I have taken *hitakṣamām* proleptically: ‘[with the result that she was] capable of [granting] all that is beneficial,’ but this is not strictly necessary, for Earth is no doubt always capable of granting all that is beneficial.

After praising the king in connection with one of his two principal metaphorical spouses, Earth, we might expect to find him praised in connection with the other, namely Śrī (or Rājyaśrī), and this is indeed what we find in the next stanza.

On stanza 12:

The restitution [*śaśva*]*d* seems to fit the sense well and its sibilants complement the subsequent alliteration (still) of the sound *kṣ*. I am all the more inclined to accept it into the text since, after adding a note to propose it, I then discovered an old file of observations by Gerdi Gerschheimer in which he had proposed the same completion, albeit with a remark about the hermeneutical need to be able to propose some restitution without being obliged to include it in the text as a conjectural emendation.

As for the word *apakṣāla*, it is not recorded by Monier-Williams (1899) and most other modern dictionaries, but it is recorded by Edgerton (1953, 42–43) in his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, citing, among other senses, the meanings ‘fault, defect, failing, sin,’ and discussing inconclusively how this odd word might have been formed. I cannot find a single further instance of the usage of the word in a non-Buddhist work, nor does Edgerton make reference to any. The one textual corpus in which it is common is that of Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Perhaps we may therefore surmise that the author of the text of this inscription combined his taste for poetry and Upaniṣads with an interest in Buddhist philosophical writings.

On stanza 13:

This verse presents a *virodha* or *virodhābhāsa* (‘apparent contradiction’): the meaning that first suggests itself is non-sensical and the reader must therefore look for a second sense to solve the riddle. Here, we expect the split *a-vi-pallavaḥ*, but to obtain an adjective that really applies to the king requires rather *a-vipal-lavaḥ*. It seems probable that the author here has adapted a word-play borrowed from a sentence in Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* which, in both Kane’s and in Führer’s editions, reads: *anavaratanayana-jalasicyamānaś ca tarur iva vipallavo ’pi sahasradhā prarohati śokaḥ*. Several of Führer’s manuscripts, however, omit the last word, and this omission makes the sentence meaningful in the way that is apparently intended by Śāṅkara’s commentary, which is included in Führer’s edition and reads as follows (1909, 26):

*anavaratam aśruṇā sicyamāno 'navaratam ghaṭasāraṇīpranālādīnā
nayanam prāpaṇam yasya tādrśā jalenoksyamānaś ca. vipallava āpalleśo
vigatapallavaś ca. prarohati sthiribhavati. tarupakṣe prarohā vidyante
yasya sa prarohaḥ sa ivācarati prarohatīti vyākhyā.*

Ignoring, therefore, the word *śokaḥ*, we may translate the sentence thus:

And even a drop of grief (*vipal-lavo 'pi*), watered unceasingly with tears
(*anavarata-nayanajala-sicyamānaḥ*) grows (*prarohati*) a thousandfold (*sa-
hasradhā*), just as a tree,

*although without leaves (vi-pallavo 'pi), sprinkled with water that is
ceaselessly brought (anavarata-nayana-jala-sicyamānaḥ), produces sprouts
(prarohati) a thousandfold.*

On stanza 14:

Note that *dānavāntakara* is an epithet of Viṣṇu in a few other places as well, such as in the old *Skandapurāṇa* (97:15, 169:80), in the unpublished Pāñcarātra *Jayottara* (9:64), and in the *Revākhaṇḍa* of the *Vāyupurāṇa* (9:35, 146:98–100). Here, however, it appears to be used punningly, since the stanza uses words that may describe both Viṣṇu and the king: Viṣṇu obviously holds conch and discus in his hands, whereas the king has auspicious marks in the lines on his hands that resemble conch and discus (cf. *Raghuvamśa* 4:91 for similar line-markings on the feet of Raghu); Viṣṇu bestrides the worlds as Trivikrama, whereas the king bestrides this world in the sense that he rules it; Viṣṇu is the nemesis (*antakara*) of demons (*dānava*), whereas the king's hands (*kara*) are never emptied (*vānta*) from giving (*dāna*), in the sense that he always has more to give. The oddity here, however, is that only the last attribute has the negative particle (*na*). Of course one could always restore the first *pāda* with a negative, either by conjecturing *na śaṅkha°* or *aśāṅkha°*, and assume that none of the epithets is to be applied to the king. The overall sense would then be that he was 'as it were another Nārāyaṇa' even though he had no conch or disk and was missing other expected attributes. Another possibility would be to take only the epithets of the first and third *pādas* as puns, while understanding *dānavāntakaraḥ* in just one sense. The effect would then be to say that he was like a second Nārāyaṇa in some respects, except that 'his hands were not the nemesis for Dānavas.' But I have not adopted this, since the accepted interpretation seems rhetorically similar to the following stanza, in that all the epithets apply except the last, which is denied for the king in both its senses. This rhetorical parallelism may be deliberate.

On stanza 15:

The interpretation offered implies that the king is like a *rājahaṃsa* that is always yearning for lake Mānasa but never sets off to fly there, or that he is like a *rājahaṃsa* that is already in lake Mānasa and never flies away from it. Without entering here into the long-running question of whether the *rājahaṃsa* is a kind of swan or goose or whether and when it eventually came to refer to a flamingo, suffice it to say that the *haṃsa* often represents or is metaphorically identified with the soul, its whiteness suggesting the soul's purity, and its migratory habit suggesting the soul's repeated metempsychosis. This identification is further reinforced in the Mantramārga by identifying the ingoing breath with the sound *haṃ* and the outgoing breath with the sound *saḥ* and insisting that humans are therefore constantly repeating a mantra, the *haṃsa* mantra, by the very act of breathing, if they only become aware of doing so (see, for example, 107–112 of the Śatika-Kālotara, ed. Goodall 2007, 141–142, 163), a sort of 'recitation' sometimes known as *ajapājapa* that reinforces the realisation that the Self is divine, since it may be interpreted as *ahaṃ saḥ*, 'I am that.' Furthermore since one's life-breath, *prāṇa*, is conceived of (in the context of the practice of *mantroccāra*) as fused with the soul, the *haṃsa* mantra may be said to reinforce the identification of the *haṃsa* with the soul.

The notion that the *rājahaṃsa* naturally belongs on lake Mānasa is attested to already by Kālidāsa (see *Raghuvamśa* 6:26), but the whole nexus of notions (namely the identification of the *haṃsa* with the transmigrating soul that is longing to 'return' to its true discarnate and liberated state, which is in turn identified with lake Mānasa) might not by then have fallen into place. I have suggested, however, without citing evidence, that this had happened at least by the time of Bāṇa (Goodall 2022a, 82n78). One indication of this is the first of the *aparavaktrā* stanzas that punctuate the *Harṣacarita*. It is addressed by the sun to Sarasvatī in chapter 1 of the *Harṣacarita* after she has been cursed to live as a mortal on earth:

*taralayasi dṛṣaṃ kim utsukāṃ akaluṣamānasavāsālālite
avatara kalahaṃsi vāpikāṃ punar api yāsyasi pañkajālayam*

Wherefore trembles thine anxious glance,
O nursling of pellucid Mānasa as thy home?
Descend, O *kalahaṃsa*, to the pond;
Again shalt thou return to the abode of lotuses.

(trans. Cowell and Thomas 1897, 13)

Given that the poet of our inscription seems to have read Bāṇa's *Harṣa-carita* (see the note on stanza 13), it seems reasonable to suppose that he might have intended to compare the king with a *haṃsa* (or pure soul) yearning to return to lake Mānasa (or to the discarnate liberated state) but not yet flying there, rather than simply with a water bird that happens to be resting on the lake.

On stanzas 16–17:

This pair of stanzas evidently requires a verb meaning 'considered as' or 'regarded as,' and the only metrically suitable possibility that has occurred to me is the rare form *ākhyata* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.1.52). Cf. the use of *ācakhyuḥ* in *Raghuvamśa* 10:23. I have assumed the prefix *ā*, partly on the grounds of that parallel, and partly because Monier-Williams states (s.v. *khyā*) that 'the simple verb occurs only in Pass. and Caus.' Otherwise one could perhaps have simply conjectured *akhyata*.

Whitney Cox observed (while in Bologna) that it is conceivable that *dvi-jah* is punningly intended also to refer to birds, who might also have regarded Jayavarman I bis as an ideal tree. I have translated *ananyajah* with 'infatuation,' since it is one of the kennings for Kāmadeva listed by Amara (*Amarakośa* 1.1:26). All the other pairs seem straightforward except the last, which is decidedly surprising. Why did ladies regard the king as a lusty pig? Or rather, in what way could it be seen as flattering to the king that ladies regarded him as a lusty pig? To answer this question, I should like to quote from a fine letter of Gerdi Gerschheimer dated 23 February 2006 that was addressed to Arlo Griffiths, Charlotte Schmid, Bertrand Porte, Bruno Bruquier and myself:

... l'explication de Charlotte [Schmid] est lumineuse (j'espère ne pas trop la déformer, mais elle me corrigera ou complétera) : la Femme (entendez l'Éternel féminin, que symbolise aussi la Terre) considère Jayavarman comme le Suidé fôlatrant, c.-à-d. comme le Sanglier (Viṣṇu). L'adjectif *krīḍa* renvoie aux «jeux» du suidé qui laboure la terre de ses défenses / de son groin? Gonda insiste sur la liaison du suidé avec la fertilité (*Aspects of early Viṣṇuism*, p. 129 ss), et Charlotte me rappelle que le Varāha avait, après tout, sans doute engrossé la Terre : cf. Gonda p. 142. [...]

Pour le plaisir donné par le Sanglier à la terre, voir par exemple, dans K. 281 (de Yaśovarman), la stance III de la face D

*ubhayor ubhayenaiva ślāghyā ratir abhūd bhuvaḥ
śrikrodadantair adhara nitambe yatkareṇa ca*

trad. Bergaigne : « Il faut célébrer le plaisir qu'ont fait à la terre deux choses de deux êtres différents : la dent du divin sanglier sur sa lèvre [sur la partie inférieure] et l'impôt de ce roi sur ses collines [la main de ce roi sur ses hanches]. »

Noter que *adhara* est certes la lèvre (plutôt inférieure), mais aussi, sans doute et plus simplement, si l'on en croit un lexique [MW], le sexe de la femme, *pudendum muliebre* comme dit MW.

Aside from setting out that 17d expresses that the king, with his fertile virility and healthy libido, seemed to the women who saw him capable of satisfying their sexual appetites, the above quotation displays the erudition and engaging style of Gerdi Gerschheimer's prolific epistolary production. Many of the computer folders I have on Khmer inscriptions contain such lively and informative letters, notes and jottings, for which I am, like other scholars in this field, lastingly grateful.

As pointed out to me by Whitney Cox, a prominent literary ornament (*alaṅkāra*) here in stanzas 16–17 is one not described by Daṇḍin in his *Kāvyādarśa*, which we know to have been read by Khmer poets (see Goodall 2022a, 25–26), namely *ullekha*, a rhetorical figure in which a single thing (here the king) is presented as being perceived in many different ways for differing reasons. Gerow (1971, 333, 334) includes *ullekha* among the figures defined for the first time after Mammaṭa, and indeed it appears to have been Ruyyaka in the twelfth century who first described and named *ullekha* in *sūtra* 19 (*ekasyāpi nimittavaśād anekadhā grahaṇam ullekhaḥ*) of his *Alaṅkārasarvasva* (p. 58 in Janaki's 1965 edition; see also 97–98 of her introduction). This demonstrates, incidentally, how tricky the application of knowledge of literary ornaments to the interpretation of an inscription can be. In some cases, recognising the presence of one *alaṅkāra* as defined by an early rhetorician such as Daṇḍin instead of the presence of another *alaṅkāra* as defined by a later rhetorical work that could not have been known to Khmer poets, such as the *Kuvalayānanda*, can change the way we interpret a stanza. In this case, however, the rhetorical figure seems to be of a self-evident kind that might have occurred to many a poet at any time, without anyone needing to know a name and a definition for it. We find, incidentally, what might be diagnosed to be another instance of the figure in st. 19 of K. 1254, another inscription of the same reign (ed. Gerschheimer and Goodall 2014, 119, 131).

Of course, as often, one could also find other ornaments here. For instance, we could understand 16–17 as furnishing a stream (*mālā*) of instances of *nindāstuti* (or *vyājastuti*), in which each characterisation of the king (with the exception of the *kalpavṛkṣa*) seems at first to be a negative criticism, but after a moment's thought reveals itself to be a compliment. The first instance of *nindāstuti* in the sequence incidentally echoes st. 28 of Face A of the seventh-century inscription of Han Chey, K. 81 (which enables us to feel confidence in the restitution of *akīrttir* in 16a):

*suprakāśitaśauryasya saṃgrāmatyāgayor api
bhīrutvaṃ yasya vikhyatam¹² akīrtter vṛjinād api*

Bien que son héroïsme se fût illustré dans les batailles et dans les largesses, il était pourtant réputé au loin pour son humeur craintive en face du déshonneur et de la fausseté. (Text and translation of Barth 1885, 15, 19)

On stanza 18:

The purity of virtues of course makes them ‘white.’ The listing of white objects in a compound to emphasise just how utterly white something is (*kṣīrakundendutuṣārādhavalaiḥ*) is an old trope probably less common in high *kāvya* than in a somewhat lower register typical of the epics and of floating visualisation stanzas (*dhyāna*). Here, for instance, is Viṣṇu sounding his conch in *Mahābhārata* 3.21:30:

*tato gokṣīrakundendumṛṇālarajataprabham
jalajaṃ pāñcājanyaṃ vai prāṇenāham apūrayam*

Then with my breath I filled my conch [called] Pāñcājanya, which is bright as cows’ milk, jasmine, moon and lotus-fibres.

Another descriptive compound comparable with ours is to be found in a *dhyāna* of Sarasvatī that many people recite as part of their regular routine of worship, and which is found among the rejected *maṅgala* verses (numbered 26*) before the first verse of the critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*:

*yā kundendutuṣārādhāradhavalā yā śubhravastrāvṛtā
yā vīṇāvaradaṇḍamaṇḍitakarā yā śvetapadmāsānā
yā brahmācyutaśaṃkaraprabhṛtibhir devaiḥ sadā vanditā
sā mām pātu sarasvatī bhagavatī niḥśeṣajādyāpahā*

¹² Thus the stone; what is intended is *vikhyātam*.

May the goddess Sarasvatī, remover of all stupidity, protect me, who is white as jasmine, moon, snow and pearl-strings, who is dressed in white garments, whose hand is adorned with excellent stem of her *vīṇā*, who is seated on a white lotus, constantly venerated by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and the other gods.

On stanza 19:

The use of this metre seems not to be common in Khmer epigraphy. I am aware of only two other instances: it is used in the first stanza of the fifth-century inscription K. 40 (reign of Rudravarman) and in the first stanza of the unpublished seventh-century inscription K. 1201. It is, in other words, a special metre, used here for heightened emotional effect. Most Sanskritists learn to label the metre in question as *prthvī*. But metrical treatises from Piṅgala onwards specify that in *prthvī* there should be a caesura (*yati*) after the eighth syllable (we may cite, by way of example, one old metrical treatise, the *Jayadevachandah* of Jayadeva (7.14: *vasugrahayutā jasan jasayalās ca prthvī guruh*, ed. Velankar 1949). None of the Khmer examples observes this caesura in all four *pādas* and indeed, as both Pollock (1977, 79–85) and Ghosh (1978) have shown, apparently independently, in their discussions of this metre, other early poets do not observe it either. Of course we cannot be sure which early stanzas with this pattern of light and heavy syllables might have been widely known among pre-Angkorian poets,¹³ but one early stanza that is surely one of the most famous instances today is one that is probably found in all editions of Bhartṛhari's *Nītiśataka* (st. 5 in Kosambi's 1946 edition), which only once applies a caesura after the eighth syllable:

labbeta sikatāsu tailam api yatnataḥ pīḍyan
pībec ca mrgatrṣṇikāsu salilaṃ pipāsārditaḥ
kadācid api paryātan / śaśaviśāṇam āsādayen
na tu pratiniṣṭamūrkhajanacittam ārādhayet

Someone might even obtain oil from sand by pressing it with great effort;
 And someone oppressed with thirst might be able to drink water from mirages;
 Perhaps someone might even procure the horn of a hare after wandering far;
 But one cannot satisfy the mind of an obstinate fool.

¹³ Normally we would expect Kālidāsa to be an obvious model, but Pollock (1977, 82) allows only two stanzas of Kālidāsa in this metre (both without an obligatory caesura) to be authentic.

Presumably most poets are aware of the metres that they use not only because of the definitions of metricians but because of felicitous stanzas they have encountered that employ those metres, which incidentally goes some way to explaining why the *anuṣṭubh* as used by celebrated poets follows rules that the old metrical treatises do not fully describe (see Jacobi 1885, 445–447). But in this case there is also, as Pollock explains (1977, 84), a rival metrical tradition reflected in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, where this precise pattern of light and heavy syllables is prescribed, but without an obligatory caesura, and the resulting metre (illustrated by *Nāṭyaśāstra* 15:116, which is quoted by Pollock) is called *vilambitagati*, not *prṭhvī*.

Oddly for such a grand stanza, it is syntactically incomplete, since the main verb that completes it (*prātiṣṭhipat*) is in the following *āryā* verse. I have taken each *pāda* as syntactically discrete, governed either by a present participle or by an absolutive, and the interpretation as a whole seems to work well. But it must be admitted that the third *pāda* contains two surprises that might make one doubt the interpretation. For it contains an instance of *anu* used as an adverbial conjunction, which our dictionaries record, but which I have not often seen, and it contains an instance of the present participle *grhṇan* prefixed by an alpha privative. Srinivasan (1967, 42–44) has a complex and inconclusive discussion on whether or not such a distinguished author as Vācaspatimīśra did or did not use various verbal forms with an alpha privative prefixed to them. From that discussion, one can see that finite verbs prefixed by the negative particle (*a°* or *an°*) would be liable to disappear over time, both because they are relatively little used and thus unfamiliar and also because they are often rendered invisible by sandhi and thus ‘endangered by sandhi’ (‘sandhigefährdet’), as Srinivasan puts it. What we have here, however, is the present participle with an alpha privative, which is less rare, and seems to be attested particularly with verbs of wishing, knowing and perceiving (Speijer [1886, 318, §404] points to *anicchan*, which is actually rather widely used, and, as Harunaga Isaacson has pointed out to me, in emails of 30 December 2023, *apaśyan* occurs in several places, for instance in *Saundarananda* 7:46, as does *ajānan*), but this usage is perhaps not common for all verbs. One can imagine the disappearance of such usages being self-reinforcing over time in a manuscript transmission: since verbal forms with an alpha privative are unusual, there may be a tendency among scribes to fail to recognise them and so to reformulate sentences where they occur, for instance by inserting the negative particle *na*, thus making them still more unusual. Inscriptions give us texts that have not been subjected to centuries of the attritional forces of manuscript transmission, and they may thus furnish instances of such forms that might not otherwise have survived.

Note that the king's indifference to the relatively lowly goal of some heaven, on the grounds that he is aiming for the faultless (*anāmayam*) condition (*padam*) of Śivahood (*śivam*), from which there is no recidivism (*sanātānam*), is in consonance with his having received Śaiva initiation, as obliquely indicated in st. 9, the fruit of which is *śivatva*. Of course in other contexts *śivapada* might instead refer to the heaven of *śivaloka*, but this possibility seems excluded here by the rejection of *triviṣṭapa*. For *triviṣṭapa* in the sense of heaven, see *Amarakośa* 1.1:6, and for *śivapada* as a name for the ultimate liberated state of *śivatva*, see for example *Matāṅgapārameśvara kriyāpāda* 9:56 and the quotation (attributed often elsewhere to the *Raurava*) given in Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary on *Mokṣakārikā* 117.

On stanza 20:

For *samsikta* used to describe a metal image as having been 'cast,' a usage that is found also in st. 17 of the contemporaneous inscription K. 1254, see the discussion of Gerschheimer and Goodall (2014, 129–130), which quotes our stanza. In the same discussion, we also speculate about the considerable weight of the image, quoting Dominique Soutif's estimation of the *bhāra* as used among the Khmers (Soutif 2009, 144–145). Rejecting earlier estimates of 300 kg and 186.6 kg, Soutif proposes that one *bhāra* may have been equivalent to 47.37 kg. This still makes for an extraordinarily heavy image, and one wonders, first of all, whether the statue was not made of gilded bronze, which might then be described as 'gold' (suggestion of Brice Vincent), and secondly whether this was an image that was intended to be carried in processions, as metal images typically are in South India today. Such South Indian images tend to be much smaller, but Southeast Asian processional images can be large. In the museum of Vat Prakheo in Vientiane, for example, several life-size bronze images of the Buddha have rings at the base for tying them fast to festival cars. The earliest inscription of the region to refer to such a procession appears to be K. 1426 (ed. Chhom, Goodall, Griffiths 2023), issued in the seventh-century reign of Jayavarman I, so a processional image is not out of the question.

Nonetheless, because the Sanskrit text of K. 1236 does not mention another deity's temple to which this 'golden' statue would belong, it seems possible that the 'golden' statue was the principal image of its own temple and that it was not a processional image. The Khmer text, however, makes mention of an arrangement of revenue-sharing (*miśrabhoga*) with some other deity. For such arrangements, see Jenner 2009a and 2009b, s.v. *miśrabhoga*, and see K. 1419, st. 6 (ed. Chhom 2019), which uses the related expression *ekabhoga*, and the annotation of Goodall (forthcoming) on st. 9 of

K. 1418. But this too arguably suggests that the deity Jayaikanātha was not merely a festival image, but the god of his own shrine, for there would surely be no need to stipulate a revenue-sharing arrangement between the principal image of a deity and that deity's festival image (*utsavamūrti*, to use the vocabulary of the late South Indian Temple Āgamas). It is perhaps possible, however, that he should have been both. Also conceivable is that Jayaikanātha was an addition to an already busy multi-deity religious complex. This is arguably suggested by the other names that occur in the Khmer text and that might be names for such a complex (namely Cāturjātakapramāṇa Māhātmika Sthāna and Slau Pāna) in conjunction with mention of a revenue-sharing arrangement with another deity or deities.

The name Jayaikanātha is presumably selected for the deity because it echoes the king's name. It is furthermore possible that Jayaikanātha was one of his birudas. We may observe in passing that it is in fact rather rare to find inscriptions that record installations and endowments by pre-Angkorian kings themselves, instead (as observed in Goodall 2023, 27–36), they often merely ratify endowments made by their courtiers. No word is said about whether the deity is a Śiva, a Viṣṇu, a Sūrya, a Harihara or someone else, but, given that all seven stanzas of the *maṅgalācarāṇa* are addressed to Śiva as supreme godhead, it seems reasonable to suppose that Jayaikanātha was a statue of Śiva. Of course it is conceivable that Jayaikanātha could have been a *liṅga*, but the convention of assigning a name ending in °īśvara was already strong in this region and so this is only a faint possibility. This brings us back to the question of revenue-sharing with another deity, since we might expect the principal Śiva in a temple to be a *liṅga* and not a statue, although the latter possibility cannot be excluded. If there was a *liṅga*, then it is highly unlikely that it occupied the North-facing shrine in which the inscription is now placed, since constructed *liṅga*-shrines as a rule face East or West, with the *praṇāla* pointed to the North.

On the Khmer prose text (lines 22–30):

So much is damaged here that a full running translation is impossible. I thank Kunthea Chhom for having proposed the partial translation given above.

I have already commented, in the previous note, on the expression *miśrabhoga* and what this might or might not suggest about the relation between the deity Jayaikanātha and some other deity or deities, probably formerly installed either close by or at the same site. But no theonyms can be read. I have also briefly observed that the two names that do appear, namely Slau Pāna (line 26) and Cāturjātakapramāṇa Māhātmika Sthāna (line 28)

are apparently toponyms of unclear significance, and they come without enough immediate context to explain them. Could they both refer to the precinct in which Jayaikanātha was installed?

Some concluding remarks

As mentioned at the outset, this inscription gives us one obvious ‘historical fact,’ namely a date at which a certain king Jayavarman was ruling, namely 763 CE. Put together with the evidence of other dated and undated documents, we can conclude that this was a Jayavarman whose reign fell in the period between the king conventionally known as Jayavarman I (ca. 654–ca. 691 CE)¹⁴ and the king conventionally known as Jayavarman II, who is famously supposed to have performed a consecratory ritual for himself in 802 CE.¹⁵ In order not to disturb the numbered sequence of Khmer sovereigns established primarily by French scholars, this intermediate Jayavarman is now conventionally known as Jayavarman I *bis*, and a small corpus of inscriptions may be identified that seem to have been produced during his reign:¹⁶ K. 103 (770 CE), K. 134, K. 1236, K. 1254 (763 CE), K. 1294 (published by Estève and Soutif 2023), K. 1417 and possibly K. 1241 (perhaps 756 CE).¹⁷ A slightly less obvious ‘historical fact,’ as argued in the annotation above and already in Goodall 2012, is that the inscription appears, in stanza 9, to make reference to the initiation of the king into the Śaiva Mantramārga.

But beyond these data-points, there is a great deal of cultural history that the inscription allows us to glimpse. Most obviously, the rich literary cul-

¹⁴ For a brief recent discussion of the dates of the reign of Jayavarman I (who was earlier supposed to have reigned until 681 on the basis of K. 563, *IC* vol. II, 39–44), see Goodall and Revire 2021, 271n21.

¹⁵ For a discussion of his dates, see Coédès 1943, 12–13.

¹⁶ Dupont (1943, 19) counts K. 134 and K. 103 as belonging to the reign of Jayavarman I *bis*, but also K. 126 and K. 131. The inclusion of K. 126 was subsequently acknowledged to be due to an error by Coédès when he published that inscription (*IC* vol. VII, 33). As for K. 131, it is a fragment of 4 lines in Sanskrit from Sambor (Ta King) of which there appears to be no inked estampage at the EFEO and so I have seen no image of it. I find no other more detailed statement by Coédès of what it contains, but Dupont (1943, 19) says that it is undated and contains a mention of Jayavarman, whom he identifies as Jayavarman I *bis*.

¹⁷ For further remarks on this corpus, see Estève and Soutif 2023 and Goodall 2023, 12–13.

ture of India has clearly been carefully studied and emulated by the poet who composed the text that has been engraved. Kielhorn (1902) first drew attention to echoes in a seventh-century inscription (K. 81) of what is perhaps the most widely emulated Sanskrit work of poetry in surviving Khmer *kāvya*, namely Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, and Bhattacharya (1991, *passim*) has indicated many others. But here in K. 1236 we find allusions of various kinds to a less commonly echoed range of texts (or at least ones whose echoes have not often been noted till date), namely to Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* and *Mālavikāgnimitra*, to the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, to Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, to Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*.

Furthermore, we find evidence of an evolution of style in the poetry composed in Cambodia that was thus clearly keeping pace with developments on the Indian sub-continent. This particularly concerns a taste for heavy alliteration and punning, both generally eschewed by Kālidāsa.¹⁸

Now Coedès when introducing K. 253N discusses its style in these terms (1911, 214):

Le style de cette première inscription mérite de retenir un moment l'attention. A la redondance et à la grandiloquence ordinaires dans ces genres de *kāvyas* viennent s'ajouter deux traits particuliers : d'une part l'emploi constant de très longs composés remplissant jusqu'à deux *pādas* (I, *c-d* ; II, *c-d* ; III, *a-b* ; IV, *c-d* ; VII, *a-b* ; VIII, *a-b* ; IX, *c-d* ; X, *a-b* ; XII, *a-b* ; XIII, *c-d* ; XVI, *a-b*), et d'autre part la fréquence du procédé de style qui consiste à répéter le plus grand nombre de fois possible le même *akṣara* à l'intérieur d'une même stance (I : *nga* ; II : *ksa* ; III : *dha* et *dhva* ; VI : *ṣ* et *ṣr* ; VII : *rya* ; etc.).

Coedès then goes on to quote the seventh stanza of the introduction to Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, about supposed regional styles of poetry, and *Kāvyādarśa* 1:72. The latter is quoted above in the annotation to st. 9 of our inscription. Bāṇa's well known stanza is this:

¹⁸ The exception is the first half of chapter 9 of the *Raghuvamśa*, in which syllables 2, 3 and 4 of each fourth verse-quarter are reproduced as syllables 5, 6 and 7, an alliterative figure that inevitably involves a certain amount of punning. Some regard this change in style as an indication that Kālidāsa only composed chapters 1 through 8, inferring that chapter 9 marks a shift in authorship. Shulman, however (Bronner, Shulman, Tubb 2014, 62), takes the stylistic change as marking off the narration of the tale of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and suggests that Kālidāsa may have been 'pioneering a mode that would become standard in later *kāvya*.'

*śleṣaprāyam udīcyeṣu praticyeṣu arthamātrakam
utprekṣā dākṣiṇātyeṣu gaudeṣu akṣaraḍambaraḥ*

In the North plays on words are mainly admired; in the West it is only the sense; in the South it is poetical fancy; in Gauḍa pomp of syllables. (Trans. Cowell and Thomas 1897, 2)

Cœdès concludes his discussion of style with this observation (1911, 215):

Il est donc extrêmement vraisemblable que ce texte est dû à quelque pandit formé chez les Gaudas. L'existence d'un document portant si nettement la marque d'une école présente un intérêt du même genre que l'apparition au Champa des caractères à tête rectangulaire, ou au Cambodge des alphabets *nāgarīs*. Ces modes passagères prouvent jusqu'à l'évidence la continuité des relations entre l'Inde et les royaumes indiens de la péninsule transgangaïque, et dans cet ordre de recherches, le plus petit fait mérite d'être souligné.

Now I am not sure that we absolutely have to conclude, with Cœdès, that the poet of K. 235N, writing in the first quarter of the tenth century, was likely to have been educated among Gauḍas; but I did, on the strength of K. 1236, make similar remarks about this sort of style suggesting the continuity of relations between the different regions of the Sanskrit cosmopolis (Goodall 2012, 355–357). But K. 1236 is a century and a half earlier than K. 235N. Whereas Cœdès' remarks concern an inscription of the Angkorian period, here we can see that they apply already to a work of the eighth century. In other words, the shifting fashions in Indian poetry were being picked up by Khmer poets rather more quickly, suggesting rather close communication between even the more distant parts of the world of Sanskrit influence. Returning to the question of education among Gauḍa poets, perhaps we should rather say that the poets of K. 1236 and later of K. 235N, and indeed of many other Angkorian-period inscriptions besides, while not relinquishing the influence of Kālidāsa, allowed themselves to be caught up in a wave of enthusiasm for the poetry, in both prose and verse, of Bāṇa, features of whose practice can 'be observed in the centuries that followed in the works of the Pala poets and others working in and around the courts at Kannauj' (thus Tubb in Bronner, Shulman, Tubb 2014, 352). In his chapter 'On the Boldness of Bāṇa' (Bronner, Shulman, Tubb 2014, 308–354), Tubb has laid out these features in the surviving verse poetry ascribed to Bāṇa, and we can see in st. 13 of K. 1236, and later also in st. 165 of K. 528 and st. 213 of K. 806 (see Goodall 2022a, 218), Khmer allusions also to the prose poetry of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*.

Incidentally, it seems conceivable that the king himself, because of his close personal connection to India, may have had something to do with the poetry produced at his court closely reflecting Indian fashions. For Jayavarman I *bis* may have had an Indian father. He appears to be the earliest figure in the Khmer epigraphical record to make the claim that he was both brahmin and *kṣatriya* on the grounds of being descended from mixed parentage. The published inscriptions where this claim is made are K. 134 (st. 1), the inscription that first led Cœdès to suppose the existence of Jayavarman I *bis* (IC vol. II, 92), and K. 1294, an inscription on a silver ewer, published by Julia Estève and Dominique Soutif (2023) that seems, on paleographic grounds, likely to belong to the eighth century and that describes the king, again a Jayavarman, with the expression *vrahmakṣitiśaḥ*. To these we may add the unpublished inscription K. 1417 (side B, st. 3 and side A, st. 6, using the expressions *dvijakṣatra* and *viprakṣatra*), a stela engraved on two sides in Sanskrit and on one in Khmer, issued by a Jayavarman, and which seems again likely to belong to the eighth century. K. 1417 may furthermore furnish the only instance in the Khmer epigraphic record of *pravara* being used to refer to a distinguished brahmin sage as an ancestor, for it describes the king (side B, st. 3) as being *prasiddhagotrāpravaraḍvijaṇmā*, ‘a twice-born [brahmin] of famed *gotra* and *pravara*’ (the relevant stanza is quoted by Goodall 2023, 12–13).

Given that the status of brahminhood seems to be only parsimoniously accorded in Khmer documents (Bourdonneau 2016, 123–136), this is perhaps evidence that the father of Jayavarman I *bis* was a brahmin and therefore perhaps a first-generation settler from somewhere in the Indian sub-continent. Now this may at first blush seem a dubious hypothesis, particularly since there are other royal dynasties elsewhere, such as the Pallavas, who claim to be in some sense both brahmin and *kṣatriya*. But it should be noted first of all that Pallava kings do not make such a claim on the basis of miscegenation. For a fuller discussion of the evidence for the relative rarity of brahmins among the Khmers, see Goodall 2023, 6–15; but to summarise very briefly, we do not find pre-Angkorian inscriptions attesting to land grants to brahmin communities (such as are common across the Indian sub-continent) and we do not have Khmer inscriptional evidence of multiple generations of Veda-knowing brahmin families; instead, the brahmins who are mentioned often marry women of royal descent (seven documented instances are mentioned by Goodall 2023, 11–12) and tend to have children who are not said to be brahmin or who bear non-brahmin names or who are explicitly said not to be brahmin (Goodall 2023, 9–11).

To return, after this digression about the ancestry of Jayavarman I *bis*, to the discussion of bi-textual poetry, there are of course earlier inscriptions that are highly literary, but they do not seem to use *śleṣa*, at least not in any great profusion (an example is st. 3 in the seventh-century inscription K. 763, ed. Goodall 2020, 19), nor do they contain plentiful recognisable echoes of post-Kālidāsa poetry (though of course it is likely, given how much poetry has been lost, that we would not be able to recognise many such echoes). After the reign of the seventh-century Jayavarman I, the epigraphic evidence is too sparse for us to be able to make judgments about the literary quality of the Sanskrit poetry among the Khmers, until, that is, we reach the reign of Jayavarman I *bis* seventy years later, which attests, as we can see from our inscription K. 1236 (as well as to a lesser extent from K. 1417 and K. 1254) to new literary fashions, based on a wider range of Indian literary models.

What we seem to see, in other words, is that the grand high style of Khmer political poetry that we associate with the Angkorian period, which arguably reached its zenith in the reign of Rājendravarman (944–968 CE), notably in the inscriptions of East Mebon (K. 528), Pre Rup (K. 806) and Bat Chum (in particular K. 267, recently re-edited and re-translated by Anjaneya Sarma, Goodall and Isaacson [forthcoming])—a style that is replete with allusions to a wide variety of Indian literary models and deploys a broad range of *alaṅkāras* that are furthermore frequently ‘animated’ by a profusion of puns (*śleṣānuprāṇita*)—is in fact something that was gradually taking shape through the pre-Angkorian period and could, on the evidence of K. 1236, be said to have been attained already in the eighth century.

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Textual analysis methodology and royal representation in copperplate grants

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1. *Introduction*

1.1 *Prologue*

This is an account of an attempt to anchor certain modes of historical inquiry more closely in the primary sources than typically done in the study of premodern South Asian history. Inherent in this attempt is the implication that there is something objectively ‘out there,’ that this something can be increasingly approximated through study, and that sources such as inscriptions can serve as the basis of such study. Every now and then, postmodern critique seems to demonise positivism and, indeed, to construct a ‘positivist’ straw man to deride and demolish. I choose, optimistically, to believe that such rhetoric is intended in the main to emphasise the need for ap-

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proaches alternative to narrow-minded early positivism, and not to throw the baby of historical knowledge out with the bathwater of orientalist (or Hegelian, Marxist, etc.) baggage. Indeed, as put by a theorist of one flavour of the methodological approach I explore here,

Once one moves away from a position whereby knowledge claims are seen to be founded on some form of true and accurate representations of reality [...] there is a tendency to move toward an uneasy relativism and a form of epistemological special pleading. This can easily lead to the ultimate caricature of post-modernism, whereby any and every claim to knowledge is upheld as equally valid (Bryant 2017, 340).

Whatever our preferred philosophical stance, knowledge system or research paradigm may be, there are certain entities that we accept as—or posit to be—productive approximations of a reality external to our conceptual model. Whether that is a simple and concrete reality—such as when a certain king reigned—or a more complex and rarefied one—such as what the idea labelled for convenience as ‘kingship’ actually meant in a particular socioeconomic milieu, or how the institution of ‘kingship’ was articulated in a particular discursive formation—is irrelevant in this regard. Unless our only purpose is to delight in (or despair of) an infinite play of signifiers, we attempt to make propositions that possess some sort of truth value, even if that truth value cannot be quantified and is not scientifically falsifiable.

One customary way to arrive at such propositions is what we might call the ‘hermeneutic’ approach: the close reading of a circumscribed selection of source text, where the researcher deploys her previously acquired knowledge of the text, of related texts, and of various aspects of its broader context to explore manifold implications, all the while remaining firmly rooted in the primary source. The inductive inferences made in this process often lead to new insights. However, generalising any such insights to a domain larger than the source under scrutiny is a risky process. Another way, which could be called the ‘historical’ approach, starts with the researcher’s extensive knowledge and relies on intuition to find patterns and connections. Hypotheses inferred inductively or abductively from this mass of knowledge may be confirmed through their coherence and/or corroborated by evidence from selected sources. But such evidence is cherry-picked by the researcher *because* it corroborates her theory. This in turn invites confirmation bias: the danger that the scholar, even without consciously intending to do so, predominantly selects evidence in favour of the hypothesis at hand and

overlooks evidence to counter it. While such quandaries (dare I say aporias?) inhere inevitably in historical research, there is never any harm in trying to shift theorising if not altogether out of the armchair then at least a little closer toward the ‘ground’ of textual evidence.

1.2 Introducing textual analysis methods

The technique I explore here belongs to a fairly diverse family of methodologies that derive from an approach known as Content Analysis. According to one of its great exponents, the recently deceased Klaus Krippendorff, Content Analysis is ‘an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent,’ used ‘for making replicable and valid inferences from texts [...] to the contexts of their use’ (Krippendorff 2004, xvii, 18). Although studies of textual communication based on similar principles appeared as early as the seventeenth century, the term Content Analysis was coined in 1941 by Bernard Berelson, who also published the first systematic description of the method in 1952 (Krippendorff 2004, 3–4, 11). During the second half of the twentieth century, the technique quickly spread from its original application in propaganda studies to other disciplines such as psychology and ethnography.¹

With this spread and the accompanying adaptation to various research interests and metatheoretical stances came a methodological diversification, boosted further by advances in communication theory and literary studies. Complementing the initial focus on deductive inference from a quantitative analysis of manifest communication content, the method branched out to allow for a qualitative approach focussing on inductive inferences, and for studying latent content.² Accordingly, Classical or Quantitative Content Analysis came to be distinguished in principle from Qualitative Content Analysis.

The dichotomy of qualitative versus quantitative analysis is, however, rather a fuzzy spectrum, and the term Mixed Methods is often used for investigations taking advantage of both (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 187–190). Some purely or predominantly qualitative approaches focusing on exploration and description have been developed in great detail and are

¹ For a detailed history, see Krippendorff (2004, 3–17) or Schreier (2012, 9–13).

² See Neuendorf (2017, 39) for varying definitions of Content Analysis from 1952 to 2013, and Schreier (2012, 13–16) for a discussion of qualitative techniques and latent content.

distinguished from both qualitative and quantitative Content Analysis.³ These include Applied Thematic Analysis (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012) concerned with the identification of salient themes and patterns within the texts, and the Grounded Theory Method, more often called simply Grounded Theory (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Charmaz 2014; Bryant 2017), devised for the inductive construction of theories on the basis of actions and processes featured in the texts. Facilitated by increasingly advanced solutions for computer-aided textual analysis (CATA),⁴ the explosive spread of such techniques across disciplines continues in the twenty-first century. Although the methodology has gained little ground in the arts and humanities (Neuendorf 2017, 33), historians who infer past events from available texts are, according to Krippendorff (2004, 26), by definition involved in content analysis.

In this article I use the relatively neutral term ‘textual analysis’⁵ to refer to all members of this methodological family. The essential core common to these methods is data reduction by means of ‘coding.’ They start with data that were not created for the purpose of being analysed—namely texts in the broad sense,⁶ encompassing primarily written language but often including recorded speech and extensible to non-linguistic messages. They then proceed with ‘locating meaning in the data’ (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 49) and systematising it through the application of codes in order to seek answers to specific research questions.

As a technical term in these methods, ‘code’ refers not to computer code but to ‘a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’ (Saldaña 2016, 4). The analyst closely reads the text with attention to its conceptual context and the research interest, and assigns an

³ For detailed discussion of the diverse methodologies, see Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012, 3–12) and Schreier (2012, 13–17).

⁴ CATA can also stand for computer-assisted textual analysis. Several related expressions and acronyms are used in the literature depending on individual author preference, including CAQDAS (computer-aided qualitative data analysis software) and, rather awkwardly, CACA (computer-aided content analysis).

⁵ The name ‘textual analysis’ is sometimes used in a more restricted sense to distinguish exploratory analyses from Content Analysis proper, which is then defined as obligatorily drawing inferences to social reality (Schreier 2012, 180).

⁶ Such as ‘interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, open-ended survey responses, drawings, artefacts, photographs, video, Internet sites, e-mail correspondence, academic and fictional literature, and so on’ (Saldaña 2016, 4).

applicable code to relevant points in the text. Coding is thus a kind of indexing whereby various textual loci are identified as pertinent to a particular item of interest. The conspicuous aspect of data reduction in textual analysis is the assignment of a single code to a cluster of perceived meanings deemed to be related closely enough so as not to require distinction for the purposes of the analysis. Related codes, in turn, are often classified into categories at an even higher level of abstraction compared to the specific meanings discovered in the text. Reduction is a pragmatic technique to facilitate analysis: it involves neither a denial of polysemy nor an insinuation that the reduced data represent the sum total of what the texts have to say. Losing certain specifics on the individual level is the price one pays for being able to learn more about the aggregate level (Schreier 2012, 7–8), and any insights gained thereby remain open to additional exploration by other methods (see also 2.8).

Depending on the specific method, the ‘coding frame’ (the system of codes and categories) may be predetermined on the basis of theoretical considerations or of previous research on related material, or it may emerge gradually and evolve in the course of multiple iterations of the coding process. The use of predetermined codes is seen by some as a hallmark of quantitative methods, distinguishing these from qualitative approaches where codes are constructed in the course of the analysis (Schreier 2012, 25; Charmaz 2014, 114), while other theorists admit their use in qualitative research with a confirmatory purpose as opposed to exploratory analysis where codes emerge on the go (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 7–8). While coding can be applied to many aspects of a text (including for instance grammatical structure, narratological features or poetic devices), the kind of analysis I discuss here attaches codes to the meaning of linguistic content, namely to the representation of public figures in Indian copperplate eulogies.

1.3 Applicability to copperplate eulogies

Copperplate land grant charters from the Indian subcontinent have long and widely been read as a history book. Along with inscriptions in stone, they comprise the most important and most detailed primary sources on premodern Indian dynastic history and chronology (Sircar 1965, 4–5; Salomon 1998, 226–228). These were topics of pivotal interest for modern historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while especially from the latter part of the twentieth century, historians’ interest has branched out toward other, less tangible aspects of history that may be illu-

minated with the help of such documents. One such aspect is spreading ‘the standardized message of a great kingship’ (Stein 1977, 17) or ‘crafting the king’s charisma’ (Spencer 1984, 428).

Indeed, the presentation of the donor, usually a reigning king, is more or less ubiquitous in copperplate charters (e.g. Chhabra 1962, 10; Salomon 1998, 116). In some cases this consists only of a plain and utilitarian catalogue of the ruler’s ancestry and titles, comparable to the *intitulatio* of mediaeval European charters. More typically, however, it is a cavalcade of magniloquent epithets accompanied by elaborations of present and past rulers’ mental acuity, corporeal beauty, martial prowess and beneficent generosity, all written out at length in the form of eulogy (*praśasti*) in poetic prose or verse. The portrayal of other players in the grant process, most especially of the donees, is also not infrequent, although less pervasive and less extensive than that of kings.

Crafting more than just the king’s charisma, these depictions project the notion that the described persons conform to an ideal associated with their sociopolitical role, thereby asserting that the person in question is a perfect candidate for that role, establishing him or her firmly in that role, and simultaneously articulating the role in question as one that requires a particular set of qualifications. Thus, we can expect textual analysis methods to be productively applicable to them:

Content analyses are most successful when they focus on facts that are constituted in language, in the uses of the very texts that the content analysts are analyzing. Such linguistically constituted facts [include *inter alia*]:

Attributions: [...] The attribution of competence, character, morality, success, and belongingness to particular categories of people enables or discourages actions, makes or breaks politicians, creates heroes and demonizes villains, identifies leaders and marginalizes minorities. These facts cannot exist without language, and to the extent that texts are instrumental in disseminating and creating such attributions, they are natural targets of successful content analyses (Krippendorff 2004, 75–76).

A further reason to expect textual analysis to be productive is that the style of these eulogies tends to be highly formalised, to-the-point and coherent. If we were to compare this genre to the kinds of texts which are commonly subjected to analysis, we would in this respect find them more similar to directed public opinion questionnaires and structured interviews than to columnist articles and press releases. Moreover, unlike the often incoherent, redundant or elliptical natural language of survey and interview responses,

praśastis have been carefully engineered for efficiency by their composers and by the process of cultural evolution, in the course of which more effective details were imitated more. Accordingly, they deliver a maximum of characterisation with maximum clarity and optimum impact in a minimum of space. Indeed, often they are hardly more than a list of simple statements attributing one quality after another to the person being described. Where complexity does crop up, typically in the form of poetic stanzas elaborating a particular trait or action for greater impact, the intended message is still quite straightforward, as a rule lacking prevarication and innuendo. In other words, a large proportion of the meaning of the eulogies (as relevant to the representation of public figures in their original context) is more manifest than latent, and such meaning should be possible to identify quite clearly and objectively.

Then again, in part precisely because of the deliberately maximised efficiency of these texts, many of the concepts featured in *praśasti* are rich with nuance and connotation. Collapsing this cloud into a concrete meaning inevitably involves subjectivity and potential bias. The methodology of textual analysis is, however, fully reconcilable with the notion of meaning arising out of a complex interaction of text, context and recipient, rather than being inherent in the text and objectively discoverable there (e.g. Krippendorff 2004, xix).⁷ Above, I have described the conspicuous aspect of data reduction as the allocation of a smaller range of more abstract codes to a greater range of more concrete textual expressions. Another aspect of reduction, less explicit but no less fundamental, consists in consciously constraining potential meanings to those applicable to a particular context in which the texts have been read and of which the analyst is knowledgeable:

Texts have meanings relative to particular contexts, discourses, or purposes. [...] Differences in interpretations do not preclude the possibility of agreements within particular contexts, however. In fact, once content analysts have chosen the context within which they intend to make sense of a given text, the diversity of interpretations may well be reduced to a manageable number [...] The analyst must, in effect, construct a world in which the texts make sense and can answer the analyst's research questions (Krippendorff 2004, 24).

⁷ See also Krippendorff (2004, 22–25) and Schreier (2012, 176–178) for further discussion.

Such a context constructed for an analysis ‘embraces all the knowledge that the analyst applies to given texts, whether in the form of scientific theories, plausibly argued propositions, empirical evidence, grounded intuitions, or knowledge of reading habits’ (Krippendorff 2004, 33). Textual analysis thus cannot claim to be altogether objective, since through engaging with the texts, the researcher inevitably contributes an individual perspective to the interpretation. My familiarity with the expression of Eastern Cālūkyā copperplate grants gained in the course of over three years spent editing these texts certainly helps in constructing meanings they would likely have communicated to their intended audiences, but this is not to say that different meanings found by someone else in the same eulogies are necessarily less legitimate or less relevant.

What makes the method reasonably valid in spite of this is the systematic design of the coding frame and its uniform application to all analysed texts, paired with transparency in the reporting of the analysis.⁸ Systematicity reduces the effect of researcher bias and increases the consistency of interpretation across texts and across research time (as well as across individual coders in a larger project), while transparency bolsters the credibility of the process and allows both the analyst and the reader to be mindful of the details more strongly affected by subjective factors.

To sum up: my endeavour here is to analyse the content of copperplate eulogies as it would have been perceived by the original audience of these texts in the historical context in which they were circulated, and inasmuch as it pertains to the representation of public personages. Through studying the thematic composition of the ideals, I hope to contribute to our understanding of how these roles were projected, perceived and articulated in their original milieu. I have fruitfully applied this method in two studies (Balogh in press 2025 & 2024), the former of which includes a sketch of the methodology. The present paper, conversely, is dedicated primarily to methodological considerations, discussing specific research applications only in passing.

1.4 *A note on terminology*

The technical literature of textual analysis is something of a terminological jungle, with many terms defined either only vaguely, or differently depend-

⁸ See Krippendorff (2004, 316–321) for a detailed overview of the concern of validity primarily in inferential content analysis, and Schreier (2012, 26–27) about objectivity, reliability and validity as applicable to qualitative analysis.

ing on the author and the specific analytical school. Moreover, many terms (such as ‘concept’ and ‘theme’) are frequently used both in a technical sense and in a broader everyday English sense. The present paper is also guilty of doing so, but I hope that it is nonetheless intelligible so long as the reader is mindful of the context in which a term occurs. In this section, I give some elaboration of my terminological choices and clarify those terms which may have different meanings in different contexts. The specific contexts in which some terms may have restricted or specialised meaning are my textual analysis method, the analytical software tool CATMA (q. v. 2.7), and text encoding in XML.

A **code** is a basic concept of textual analysis as introduced in 1.2, unless it is clear from the context that computer code is meant. Accordingly, **coding** refers to the assignment of analytical codes to text, distinct from **encoding**, which in this paper means the marking up (see below) of a text with XML code to create a digital document. A set of codes applied in a particular analysis is referred to as a **codebook** or, especially when these codes are hierarchically organised, a **coding frame**. In CATMA, a code is called a **tag**, and a codebook is called a **tagset**. In the context of XML encoding, however, a tag is a piece of computer code representing an XML **element**, which in turn encodes some kind of information about a particular locus in the text. This can include, but is by no means limited to, textual analytical information. I use the word tag in both of these meanings, and **tagging** to mean the attachment of either an analytical CATMA tag or an XML tag to a segment of text. Thus, tagging is roughly synonymous to **marking up** (or adding **markup** to) a text, which means the insertion of any information pertaining to some aspect of the text, including XML code and CATMA tags as well as traditional kinds of markup such as the editorial parentheses, asterisks and other signs used in a printed edition of a primary text to communicate information about specific parts of that text.

CATMA tags may have **properties**, which differentiate or refine the meaning of a tag. They are open to a wide range of uses, but were probably envisioned by the developers to be used as in Grounded Theory, where coded concepts themselves are quite abstract, and are used in conjunction with multiple properties that differentiate and concretise these concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 57, 220). My analysis utilises CATMA properties in a simpler and more restricted way, essentially as an extra hierarchical level for recording supplementary content-analytical information (described in 2.3). In XML encoding, **attributes** similarly record additional details about an XML element, and when an XML file is imported into CATMA, elements in that file are converted to CATMA tags, while attributes of the elements are converted into CATMA properties, which I have taken advantage of

when adding metadata to my texts (3.2) and to the descriptive passages in them (3.4).

In many coding frames including mine,⁹ codes are organised into a hierarchy, with codes for more specific concepts subordinated to codes for broader concepts. From an abstract perspective, and as implemented in CATMA, there is no essential difference between a code on a higher level of the hierarchy and one on a lower level, since both serve to concretise some unit of meaning perceived in the text.¹⁰ Higher-level components of such a hierarchy are often called **categories** (Schreier 2012, 60, 62), and components on the most abstract level may be called main categories or **dimensions** (Schreier 2012, 59).¹¹ I prefer to keep dimensions conceptually separate from categories because in my analytical framework codes representing a category can sometimes be attached to a point in the text, whereas codes representing a dimension cannot. I therefore avoid the term ‘main category,’ but do occasionally use the redundant expression ‘intermediate category’ to make it explicit that my categories do not represent the highest hierarchical level, and the term ‘subcategory’ to indicate a category that is itself subordinate to another category (rather than directly to a dimension).

I use the word **concept** (in addition to using it in its dictionary sense depending on context) to refer to a unit of meaning perceived in a text. This usage is widespread in the technical literature, but in Grounded Theory, a concept sometimes refers to the most abstract categories of a coding frame (Bryant 2017, 96–97, 121–123), although this definition is admittedly too vague (Bryant 2017, 119–120). Elsewhere, conceptual entities that undergo coding may be called themes (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 50), but the word ‘theme’ is more typically reserved for higher levels of abstraction.

Thus, concepts identified in a text are assigned a code in the course of analysis. Codes manifest in CATMA as tags, which may be qualified by properties. As organised into a coding frame, some codes represent categories, and all codes including categories are assigned to dimensions.

⁹ My codebook is available in my online dataset (Balogh 2023b).

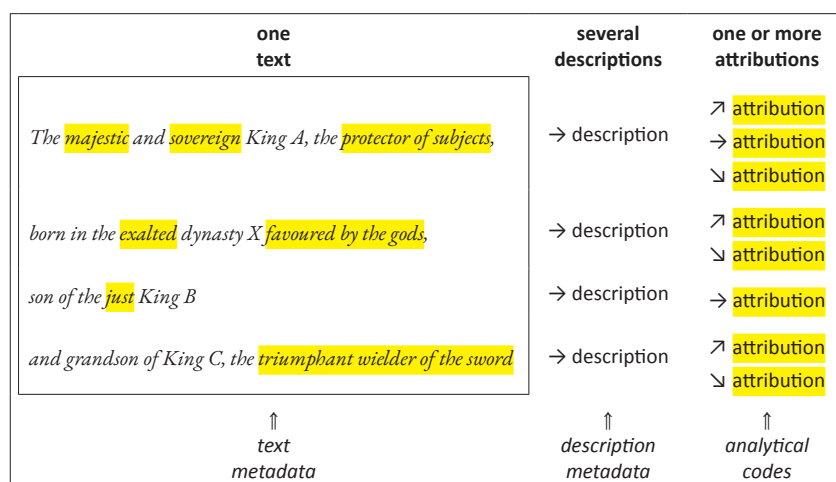
¹⁰ However, see also 5.2.

¹¹ In Grounded Theory, however, ‘dimension’ is a technical term for the range of possible values that a property (in its specific Grounded Theory sense) can take (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 57).

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 Data model

My analytical approach involves data pertaining to three separate, hierarchically organised tiers. The data on the lowest level are the actual analytical data obtained from the coding of representation-related content, while data on the two higher levels are metadata, which provide context for the analytical data and allow them to be classified in various ways for the analysis of specific subsamples. The three tiers of recording units are conceived of in a strict treelike hierarchy: while each of the lower-level units is always encapsulated within a higher-level unit, none of the units on any particular level overlap other units on the same level. This conceptual model of the data is illustrated in Box 1 using a brief English excerpt from the Bologna plates of King A, inscribed on a hard drive in 2023.



Box 1. Conceptual overview of the data model

The smallest unit of recording/coding (Krippendorff 2004, 99–101) in my analysis, and the actual unit of coding (Schreier 2012, 131–132) for the textual analysis of representation itself, is the attribution, a proposition characterising a person or entity, defined more accurately in 2.2. Attributions are thus unitised on the basis of propositional criteria, specifically of certain semantic relations between conceptual components (Krippendorff 2004, 106–107). The data associated with the tier of attributions are the

analytical codes introduced in 2.3. In the coding process, each attribution is tagged with exactly one analytical code as detailed in 3.5.

Attributions are invariably contained within larger units of recording/coding, which I call descriptive passages or simply descriptions. A descriptive passage is essentially a contiguous segment of text which characterises a specific person (or entity) relevant to the analysis by at least one attribution. The unitisation of descriptions thus involves physical as well as syntactical and categorical criteria (Krippendorff 2004, 103–106). The data associated with descriptions, introduced in detail in 2.4 and 2.5, describe the nature and social context of the entity being represented through that description. The demarcation of descriptions is explained in 3.3, and the method of encoding their metadata is presented in 3.4.

Discrete inscriptions comprise the highest-level units of recording/coding, and coincide with sampling units (Krippendorff 2004, 98–99), which are demarcated on the basis of physical criteria (Krippendorff 2004, 103–104). Each inscription text normally contains several descriptions. Data recorded for this tier are also metadata: they describe properties applicable to texts as a whole, such as the time of their creation or the identity of the ruler who issued them. Text metadata are introduced in 2.6, while the manner of their recording is discussed in 3.2.

Thanks to the existence of diverse text and description metadata, units of analysis (Schreier 2012, 130–131) can be delineated in versatile ways. In addition to studying natural units of coding—such as the dataset as a whole, individual texts, or individual descriptions—it becomes possible to single out representational content associated with any arbitrary combination of these metadata. Metadata can thus be used as independent variables in analysing how their variation affects the dependent variable, the representational content (demonstrated in 4.3 and 4.4). In addition, combinations of metadata can also be used as an index for retrieving actual descriptions of a particular kind for qualitative study (4.1), and for gathering demographic data consisting of the number of attributions dedicated in the texts to various subsets of protagonists (4.2).

2.2 Attributions, documentary data and characterisation

For the purposes of my analysis, an attribution is defined as an explicit or implicit proposition which characterises a person or a collective entity relevant to the analysis by imputing to them a quality or action relevant to representation. There is no failsafe criterion for precisely what makes ‘a quality or action

relevant to representation,' but on the whole, attributions can be recognised with reasonable consistency through close reading by a person who has sufficient command of the language, familiarity with the textual corpus, and an overall idea of what kinds of concepts bear upon the research interest.

In general, *praśasti* tends to lack innocuous detail, but the propositions made in it can have different degrees of relevance to representation. I therefore distinguish characterisation from documentary detail. The latter is typically included in the text for the purpose of identification or recordkeeping, and involves personal data such as the name of an individual, the name of their family or their *gotra*, the designation of their theoretical or spiritual school (*śākhā*, *sūtra*, etc.), their place of domicile, or their relatedness to another person. Less frequently, documentary details include significant dates such as that of a king's coronation, and (commonly in Eastern Cālukya genealogies) the length of a predecessor's reign. Documentary information is the basis for determining description metadata, but is as a rule irrelevant for the analysis of representation.¹²

I make a further distinction between substantial and insubstantial characterisation. By the latter, I mean propositions that do have a characterising function, but are typically employed in a formulaic manner, such as the use of *śrī* or a title in conjunction with a name; or, in Eastern Cālukya grants, the claim that a predecessor was 'eager to ornament the dynasty' (*kulam alamkariṣṇu*).¹³ In addition, vague attributions of eminence to a collective entity such as a lineage have also been classified as insubstantial.¹⁴

The boundaries separating documentary from characterisation and insubstantial from substantial are of course somewhat fuzzy. Documentary data or insubstantial characterisation were never recognised as attributions when they appeared in isolation, i.e. in a passage consisting only of documentary and/or insubstantial propositions. When, however, such propositions

¹² Arguably, certain documentary data may constitute implicit characterisation by their mere presence, such as that someone had ancestors worthy of being named, belonged to a particular *gotra* or *śākhā*, etc. I have chosen to ignore this and to take account only of more explicit characterisation. See also 3.5 about the potentially characterising nature of names and epithets.

¹³ Almost all later grants of the dynasty start their genealogy from Pulakeśin II, whom they introduce with this phrase and no additional detail, after having described the dynasty itself at length. In some other dynastic corpora, successive members of the genealogy are introduced with *tasya putras tat-pādānudhyātaḥ* or an analogous phrase, which I might likewise qualify as formulaic.

¹⁴ See 3.3 for further details.

were semantically contiguous to substantial characterisation, they were included in the scope of the descriptive passage containing that characterisation, as explained and illustrated in 3.3 below. The choice to include such detail while demarcating descriptions was in effect a choice to err on the side of caution: actual case-by-case judgement about the relevance of any such item to representation could be postponed to the subsequent stage of close reading. The practical aspects of this judgement are presented in 3.5.

2.3 Codes and dimensions

Analytical codes serve to concretise what is being attributed to a particular person at a particular point in the text. As pointed out above, the semantically dense language of *praśasti* often conveys more than one meaning simultaneously: a particular proposition can arguably imply multiple characteristics. Whereas exploring this kind of subtlety and tracing chains of association is desirable in qualitative analyses of small amounts of text, it is detrimental to the quantitative analysis of a larger text base. My data model therefore strictly allows only one representational code for any particular attribution, representing the most salient of the analytically relevant traits potentially asserted thereby. From the perspective of attributions, these codes thus together comprise a single nominal variable. This variable represents *what* is being attributed to a person, and its possible values are any one of the many different codes. However, with respect to actual units of quantitative analysis, derived by slicing the mass of data on the basis of metadata, each code comprises a separate numeric (ratio-scale) variable. The measure of this variable is frequency: the *number of times* a certain code appears in a given subset of the data tells us how frequently the corresponding trait is attributed to the corresponding class of personages.¹⁵

My particular coding frame, developed as described in 3.6 and presented in detail in my dataset (Balogh 2023b), consists of 182 individual codes (corresponding to specific concepts in the text) at the bottom level. The number of codes is high in order to accommodate some of the nuances of meaning found in the texts. To make analysis possible from a broader perspective without becoming bogged down in the details, the many specific codes have been sorted at the top level into 12 highly abstract classes, which I call ‘di-

¹⁵ See also Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012), 138–141 about frequencies in the quantification of qualitative data, and 172–177 about frequency-based comparison.

mensions,¹⁶ corresponding to broad themes in the text. In between these two extremes, there may be up to two intermediate levels of ‘categories’ (corresponding to progressively narrower themes), and below the bottom level there may be a supplementary tier: some codes come with a ‘property’ for recording specific detail that is not meant to be analysed quantitatively. This hierarchical organisation of my coding frame is illustrated with some examples in Box 2.

dimension	category	subcategory	concept	property
Intellect	education		vedic education	How many Vedas? E.g. 3.
Intellect	education		law education	
Intellect			intelligence	
Prestige	title	royal title	superior royal title	What? E.g. <i>mahādevī</i> .
Prestige	title		non-royal title	
Prestige			insignia	What? E.g. <i>varāha-lāñchana</i> .
Entitlement	sanction to rule		divine sanction	By whom? E.g. Mahāsena.
Entitlement	sanction to rule		popular sanction	
Entitlement			inspiring loyalty	

Box 2. Conceptual hierarchy in the coding frame

Categories are helpful for linking together a group of codes which are more closely related to each other than to other codes contributing to the same dimension. For instance, various kinds of education all contribute to the dimension of Intellect, but are semantically less distant from each other than any of them are from other factors of the same dimension, such as intelligence. The use of categories facilitates a quantitative comparison of the factors contributing to a dimension by keeping the number of such factors relatively small even though the actual number of codes belonging to that dimension is much larger.¹⁷

Properties, conversely, record supplementary details which are not expected to be relevant to quantitative analysis, but which may be interesting in the long run and convenient to have at one’s fingertips without needing to look up the original text. Properties are not indispensable for my coding frame: it would have been equally possible to record the same data by introducing additional individual codes (corresponding to each possible value of a property) and grouping them into categories (corresponding to the code

¹⁶ See also 1.4 about the terminology for the hierarchical levels of the coding frame.

¹⁷ Figure 8 in 4.4 is an example of such an analysis.

which has that property). However, this would have resulted in an inordinate number of individual codes, many of which would have occurred only a very few times in the entire corpus. Since properties are readily manageable in the CATMA platform (2.7), taking advantage of them has helped keep the count of individual codes within reasonable limits.

Details for which I have chosen to use properties are those whose impact on representation is not straightforward, especially when their expected variation is broad and open-ended, or when they pertain to a concept that already has several hierarchical levels above it.¹⁸ However, some details with broad variation—such as assorted branches of education and diverse traits of physical attractiveness—were instead recorded as distinct individual codes because they were deemed germane to the study of representation.

Aside from the obvious difference that a higher hierarchical level involves greater abstraction and thus a smaller number of distinctions, there is another cardinal dissemblance between codes and properties on the one hand, and dimensions and categories on the other. Codes and, where applicable, properties, are allocated to textual loci on the basis of individual consideration and judgement in the course of close reading, whereas the assignment of codes to dimensions (and, where applicable, to categories) takes place according to a global conceptual framework. Thus, when polyvalence in the text is collapsed to a single interpretation in the course of coding, this takes place on a case-by-case basis, from the bottom up as it were. For example, the act of giving can correspond in my coding frame to the concepts of charity, patronage or generosity. Whenever giving is mentioned in a text, the analyst must consider the context and assign the appropriate code depending primarily on whether giving is featured in connection to need, merit, or neither (respectively cuing the above-named three concepts).

Conversely, the further reduction of semantically related concrete codes into more abstract classes happens in a mechanistic fashion. In my final coding frame, the codes for charity and patronage belong to the dimension of Beneficence, while that of generosity contributes to Prestige (see also 4.1). Acts of patronage do affect reputation, acts of charity do have moral implications, and generosity does imply beneficence. But the choice to ignore these and other less salient potential meanings is built into the coding frame:

¹⁸ An example of open-ended variation is the identity of a deity to whom a person is likened, recorded as a property on the code for superhuman stature. (When the nature of a deity strongly implies a specific trait or one is explicitly present in the comparison, this is coded separately.) An example of deeply embedded variation is the number of Vedas known to a ritualist, recorded as a property on the code for Vedic education.

it is not possible to assign any *individual* instance of one of these codes to a different dimension. If the mapping of a particular code to a particular dimension seems unsatisfactory, then this can be mitigated by reconceptualising the hierarchy of categories to reassign *all* instances of that particular code, or by splitting the code into subtly different new codes, and then re-coding the affected segments of text.¹⁹

dimension	category	subcategory	concept	code name
Intellect	education		vedic education	/INT:education:vedic
Intellect	education		law education	/INT:education:law
Intellect			intelligence	/INT:intelligence
Prestige	title	royal title	superior royal title	/PRE:title:royal:superior
Prestige	title		non-royal title	/PRE:title:other
Prestige			insignia	/PRE:insignia
Entitlement	sanction to rule		divine sanction	/ENT:sanction:divine
Entitlement	sanction to rule		popular sanction	/ENT:sanction:popular
Entitlement			inspiring loyalty	/ENT:loyalty

Box 3. Code names reflecting the conceptual hierarchy

In order to facilitate management and sorting (and to work around a limitation of the software used, see 2.7), the names of my codes begin with an initial slash followed by three uppercase letters identifying the dimension to which the code belongs. The codes end in a term²⁰ intended to capture the essence of the code, separated by a colon from the dimension acronym. Codes with more than two hierarchical levels include additional terms for the intermediate level or levels, each separated by colons. The code names do not indicate whether a code possesses an attribute. As an example, Box 3 below shows the names of the codes illustrated in Box 2 above. These compound code names were a useful prop during the iterated cycles of coding, but this prop can be discarded at the stage of quantitative analysis: at that point, a code is no more than a code, and the hierarchy implicit in its name can be freely ignored if the codes are sorted into a different hierarchy.

¹⁹ Both of these operations take place many times in the cyclical process described in 3.6. See also 5.2 for further discussion of the reconceptualisation of the hierarchy.

²⁰ Or occasionally a brief phrase written in ‘camel case,’ e.g. favouredByLord.

2.4 Focus and orbit in description metadata

Information about the identity and social context of the person being described has proved rather hard to capture in a way that involves sufficient granularity to permit a wide variety of research questions, but remains sufficiently generalised or generalisable to permit classifying the analytical data into groups large enough for quantitative study. After lengthy planning and multiple revisions done both before and after embarking on the tagging of descriptions in the files, I settled on a fairly simple but reasonably robust schema.

The idea at the core of this schema hinges on the fact that in addition to describing protagonists—key players in the grant process such as the issuer and the donee—the texts frequently include descriptions of some ancestors (and occasionally other relatives) of a protagonist. I posit that these people are not presented per se, but in a supporting role meant to enhance the representation of the protagonist to whom they are related. This has led me to conceptualise the descriptions in grants as having a potentially separate ‘focus’ and ‘target.’ By focus, I mean a protagonist whom the text is meant to represent to the audience, while a target is the actual person being described at a certain locus. I use the term ‘orbit’ to denote the relationship of a description’s target to its focus. When the person being described is the focus himself or herself, the orbit is designated as ‘self,’ while orbits other than self (that is, relations of the target to the focus other than identity) are collectively termed ‘satellite orbits.’

The majestic and sovereign King A, the protector of subjects, born in the exalted dynasty X favoured by the gods, son of the just King B and grandson of King C, the triumphant wielder of the sword, grants a village to **the learned and wise Brahmin P**, son of the venerable and adept Brahmin Q.

Box 4. Example of descriptions, foci and orbits

Box 4 demonstrates foci and orbits using an excerpt of the Bologna plates. Here, the kings B and C and the dynasty X are not protagonists but supporting actors who enhance the representation of the protagonist King A. Likewise, Brahmin Q is not described per se, but to enhance the image of the protagonist Brahmin P. We have a total of six descriptive passages (marked by frames around chunks of text), four of which have King A as their focus (in purple lettering) while two have Brahmin P as their focus (in red lettering). One passage in each of these sets describes the focus himself

(in bold), while the remaining four passages describe targets who occupy satellite orbits (in regular type). The same relationship is illustrated visually in Figure 1, with King B, King C and dynasty X occupying an orbit dependent on King A, and Brahmin Q occupying an orbit dependent on Brahmin P. The foci (King A and Brahmin P) are indicated by solid stars, the individual targets (Kings B and C, and Brahmin Q) by outline stars on a circular line centred on their focus, and the collective target (Dynasty X) by a nebulous ring centred on its focus.

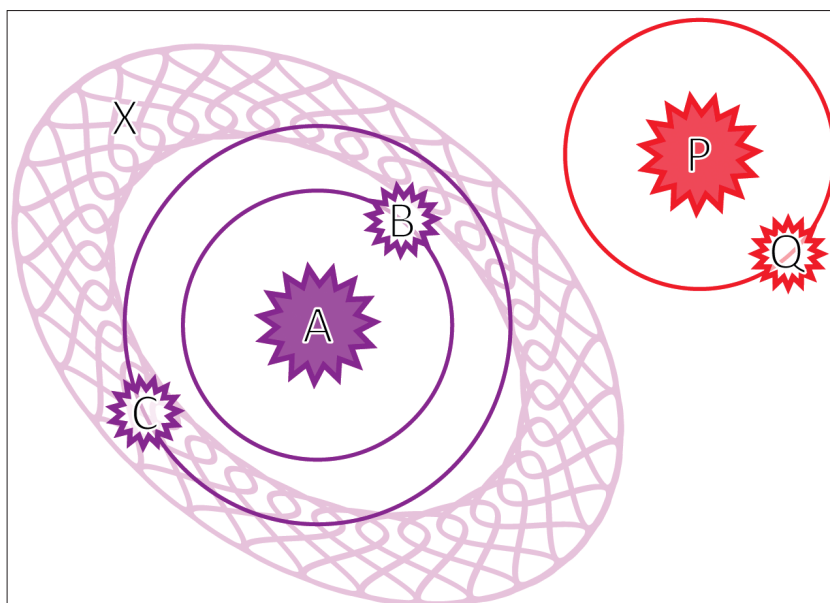


Figure 1. Foci and orbits

In my conceptual framework, foci are classified on the basis of their social function. The class assigned to a focus may be ‘sovereign’ for descriptions focused on the ruler who issued the charter in question. Another widely occurring kind of focus is ‘ritualist,’ which includes typical householder Brahmin donees (singly or as a group)—who receive a grant simply by dint of being qualified Brahmins—as well as people in a priestly occupation (such as temple priests), regardless of whether or not they are explicitly said to be Brahmins. A third class of foci is termed ‘dignitary’ and denotes people occupying a politically prominent position, including Brahmin ministers as well as members of the warrior elite. Finally, foci who do not qualify for any of these three positively defined classes have been classified as ‘commoner.’ This diverse but

small group includes, for example, scribes, village headmen and merchants.²¹

As noted above, the orbit is designated as ‘self’ when a description’s target is also its focus, and the term ‘satellite orbit’ is used as a blanket term for all other target-to-focus relationships. In my analytical schema, satellite orbits occupied by individuals were recorded using a vocabulary of specific relationship labels, consisting mostly of kinship terms (such as father, wife, grandfather, maternal granduncle, sister, nephew, etc.) but also including some positions in a chain of disciples (such as guru and grandguru). For the purpose of actual analysis, however, these individual designations were either disregarded or aggregated into metaclasses such as patriline and matriline.²² In addition, certain kinds of orbit pertain to collective rather than individual targets. Among these, I distinguish ‘lineage’ for descriptions of a royal dynasty, a house of dignitaries or a Brahmanical gotra as a whole, and ‘spiritual lineage’ for descriptions of a line of religious teachers as a whole.²³

text	description metadata	
The majestic and sovereign King A, the protector of subjects, born in the exalted dynasty X favoured by the gods, son of the just King B and grandson of King C, the triumphant wielder of the sword, grants a village to the learned and wise Brahmin P, son of the venerable and adept Brahmin Q.	focus	orbit
	sovereign	self
	sovereign	lineage
	sovereign	father
	sovereign	grandfather
	ritualist	self
	ritualist	father

Box 5. Example of foci and orbits as description metadata

Box 5 uses the Bologna plates to demonstrate how these primary description metadata are coded for individual descriptive passages. As in Box 4 above, each of the four purple descriptions in the text have a sovereign as

²¹ The shortcomings of, and possible alternatives to or extensions of, this classificatory schema are discussed in 5.6.

²² The method for such classification is described in 3.7. See also 4.2 for some examples involving the orbit metaclass ‘patriline,’ and 5.3 for general thoughts about the meta-classification of granular data. The vocabulary I have used for orbits, and the metaclasses applied to them, may be found in the ‘META’ sheet of my dataset (Balogh 2023b).

²³ Shortcomings of, and alternatives to, the coding of orbits are also discussed in 5.5.

their focus, and each of the two red descriptions have a ritualist as their focus. In each of these sets, the first description (in bold) concerns the focus himself, so the orbit is ‘self’ for these. Both sets also include a description with the orbit ‘father,’ i.e. a description whose target is the father of the focus. In addition, the sovereign-focused descriptions include one with a ‘lineage’ orbit and one with a ‘grandfather’ orbit.

2.5 Additional description metadata

Descriptions carry further metadata to facilitate slicing the analytical data in more diverse ways. Among these, gender may be recorded as ‘male,’ ‘female’ and ‘not applicable,’ and is understood by default to be male when it was not coded explicitly with another value.²⁴ The value ‘not applicable’ refers to the irrelevance of gender to collective targets such as lineages and spiritual lineages. Although such communities are not altogether gender-neutral in reality, it seems prudent to exclude them from any analysis of gender-related traits. Used in this way, the gender property doubles as an indicator of whether an entity is an individual or a group.²⁵

My data schema also caters for identifying individual targets. This allows grouping together descriptions of a particular person in any text and in any orbit. My current setup does not permit the use of target identifiers for collective orbits, nor for ritualists and their satellites, who are featured in large numbers in my texts, but their descriptions are almost always short and highly stereotyped, and hardly any particular individual ritualist is ever presented in more than one charter. Depending on the nature and size of the corpus being analysed and on the research interest of the analyst, identifiers for collective entities and identifiers for ritualists could of course be introduced.

²⁴ This is not intended to endorse or propagate a biased perception of society, being motivated by simple pragmatism. Since the overwhelming majority of persons described in the corpus are male, it is more parsimonious not to explicitly encode this in every case, but to do so only for the few non-male entities. Likewise, gender is not distinguished from biological sex simply because none of the texts at my disposal make such a distinction, and gender is treated as essentially binary simply because none of the texts treat it otherwise.

²⁵ Collective entities in satellite orbits (e.g. lineage) are also distinguished by dedicated orbit labels (2.4), but groups might conceivably feature in texts as protagonists too. This does not happen in the Veṅḡ Cālukya corpus, but one of the additional grants analysed for my study of Buddhist and Śaiva rhetoric (Balogh in press 2025) features the Buddhist *saṃgha* in the role of donee. In other corpora, different kinds of communities such as a merchant guild or a city or village council might also appear in focal roles.

Furthermore, in descriptions of ritualist foci (including their satellites), I have coded a loose classification of their religion.²⁶ Religion has been assumed by default to be ‘Brahmanical,’ understood to include the *śrauta* tradition as well as *smārta* schools not explicitly covered under another label. In other cases, normally when explicitly indicated in the text, religion may be classified as Buddhist, Jain, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava or ‘other.’ Description metadata also include an optional remark serving to record unstructured additional information about a description. It can be used to add nuance to the information formally encoded in other metadata items,²⁷ or to record noteworthy details that are not reflected in any other item. Some of this information may in the course of future study be converted into a structured form and used in analysis. Finally, I have allowed for the indication of certainty (‘high’ by default, but explicitly coded for ‘medium’ and ‘low’), separately for the identity of a target and for the nature of the orbit. Flagging these uncertain cases makes it possible to selectively exclude them from an analysis, should this be desirable.

Additional items—such as which diplomatic section of a charter houses a description, what language it uses in a multilingual inscription, or how stereotypical it is—could be added freely to the gamut of description metadata.

2.6 Text metadata

The metadata describing a text, illustrated in Box 6, are fairly simple and straightforward. Intended for identification and reference, and for capturing basic information about the historical context in which any given descriptions were composed, these data include a unique text identifier and a title serving for more verbose and human-friendly identification. An identifier of the corpus to which the charter belongs is present to allow comparisons between inscription corpora. There is also an identifier of the ruler who issued the charter, an (approximate) date when the charter was issued,

²⁶ Thus, issuing rulers or lay dignitaries never have ‘religion’ in my analytical framework, even though they may profess to follow (or be described as following) a particular religion. Depending on the corpus and research interest, a different approach may be useful in some cases, but for my purposes so far, the classification of texts by sectarian orientation, and only of clerical personages by religion, has been more than sufficient.

²⁷ Such nuance may include the focus’s social/political function (e.g. minister, courtesan, subordinate), class (e.g. Brahmin, *vaiśya*), or role in the grant process (e.g. composer, executor, instigator). See also 5.5 to 5.7.

and a (rough) margin of uncertainty for that date. Another item specifies the sectarian orientation of the grant.

As in description metadata, an optional remark can also be added to the text metadata, serving as a memo concerning any peculiarities or additional details of the text as a whole. Further optional items allow flagging a charter as incomplete, and qualifying the certainty of the issuer's identification as high, medium or low, so that it is possible if desired to exclude from an analysis any texts that are incomplete or that are uncertainly associated with a particular issuer. The certainty of the issuer is assumed by default to be high and incompleteness to be false, so that these data need only be explicitly added when this is not the case.

text	
The majestic and sovereign King A, the protector of subjects, born in the exalted dynasty X favoured by the gods, son of the just King B and grandson of King C, the triumphant wielder of the sword, grants a village to the learned and wise Brahmin P, son of the venerable and adept Brahmin Q.	
metadata	example value
<i>textID</i>	Xmpl00001
<i>title</i>	Bologna plates of A
<i>corpus</i>	DynX
<i>issuer</i>	KingA
<i>issuerCert</i>	high
<i>date</i>	2023
<i>dateMargin</i>	0
<i>sect</i>	Pastafarian
<i>incomplete</i>	yes
<i>textRemark</i>	probably spurious

Box 6. Example of text metadata

2.7 Implementation and software

Most of the texts to which I have applied this method of analysis belong to the Eastern Cālukya copperplate corpus edited by me for the DHARMA project. These are digital editions marked up in EpiDoc XML according to the DHARMA encoding conventions.²⁸ In principle, it is possible to implement

²⁸ EpiDoc is a subset of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard, for the representation of epigraphic texts in digital form using XML. See e.g. Bodard (2010) for an introduction to EpiDoc, and Balogh and Griffiths (2020) for details of the DHARMA

text-analytical annotation directly in such XML files, yet after some deliberation I have concluded that doing so would not be feasible at this stage. One core reason for this is the increased complexity of the code involved in the introduction of yet another conceptual hierarchy into the encoding schema, overlapping the already existing hierarchies.²⁹ Integrating text-analytical codes with the DHARMA EpiDoc encoding would on the one hand require considerable expertise and time, and on the other hand make the XML files so cluttered with code that it becomes all but impossible to engage with them unless more expertise and time is invested in developing a user interface. The second key reason for not going the TEI way is that if I had done so, then corpus-wide querying and revision of the textual analytical codes and their extraction for quantitative analysis would also have been laborious and highly technical. Conversely a plethora of convenient computer tools is readily available for textual analysis.³⁰ These facilitate tagging texts and include querying and analytical functionality, but do not operate natively in a TEI environment.

The downside of creating copies dedicated to textual analysis is of course that it is in the nature of digital editions to evolve. My own editions of the Eastern Cālukya copperplate charters receive ongoing updates from time to time, for example when a better facsimile of the originals or a previously unprocessed edition becomes available for collation, when a newly edited text offers a new insight into a problematic part of a previously edited one, or simply when I detect a mistyped word in the course of engaging with the editions, which happened repeatedly during close reading for textual analysis. Copies ‘forked’ away from the digital editions for the sake of textual analysis are self-evidently cut off from any such further evolution. To prevent this, and to improve interoperability, it may be profitable in the long run to establish standards for integrating text-analytical codes into a TEI markup scheme.

Computer-aided textual analysis applications include several sophisticated proprietary programs with a high cost and a steep learning curve. Not knowing beforehand whether any such software would be able to cater for all my needs, I ended up after some exploration with the tool called CAT-MA (for Computer Assisted Text Markup and Analysis), offering undog-

project’s EpiDoc encoding.

²⁹ See Renear, Mylonas, and Durand (1993) for an in-depth discussion of overlapping hierarchies.

³⁰ See e.g. Neuendorf (2017, 423–451) for a fairly recent overview.

matic text annotation.³¹ This online utility is open-access, so trying it out required only the investment of time. Its functionality is somewhat limited in comparison to commercial textual analysis tools, but it seemed to provide the essentials that I needed, and is being actively maintained and developed. The work presented here was carried out in CATMA version 6,³² which was much less extensively documented than some of the earlier versions, and I wish to express my thanks here to lead developer Malte Meister for taking the time to seriously consider and respond to my queries. In the meantime, CATMA version 7 has been launched.

In addition to being freely available, the main attraction of CATMA was that although its annotation system is not implemented in XML, it is able to import XML files (converting XML elements into CATMA tags), as well as to export both annotation systems and annotated documents in the form of TEI-conformant XML files. In these latter, annotations manifest as standoff markup, referencing the text by the starting and ending character position of a tag. I initially thought that I would, if necessary, be able to export my annotated corpus, edit the XML files manually, and then reimport them. It turned out, however, that this exceeds my technical skills, so I have not used the export functionality, but I did put the XML import facility to good use. The preparation of texts for analysis was implemented in bespoke XML encoding. This included the recording of text metadata (3.2), the tagging of descriptive passages (3.3) and the recording of description metadata (3.4), all of which could then be imported into CATMA. The software used for processing the XML files was Oxygen, but any advanced text editor could have been used instead.

CATMA then took over for the qualitative analytical phase that is the essential core of my method (3.5). The software manages the coding of texts for content through its Annotate functionality, while its Analyze feature facilitates the repeated rethinking and reapplication of the coding frame (3.6) by easily and quickly retrieving the text and context of each item annotated with a particular code, and by making it possible to revise the assigned codes as desired. CATMA supports the organisation of codes (called tags in

³¹ See Meister (2023) for the theoretical background and development history of CATMA, and Horstmann (2020) for an introduction to its annotation methods and their theoretical groundwork including an explanation of the term ‘undogmatic.’ Hands-on documentation is available at the website <https://catma.de/>.

³² Evelyn Gius, Jan Christoph Meister, Malte Meister, Marco Petris, Christian Bruck, Janina Jacke, Mareike Schumacher, Dominik Gerstorfer, Marie Flüh, Jan Horstmann (2022): CATMA 6 (Version 6.5). Zenodo. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1470118

the software, see 1.4) into treelike hierarchies of arbitrary complexity, and also has useful facilities for renaming existing codes. The latter can be done either globally in the codebook (tag list), or one can use the Analyze feature to retrieve each instance of a tag with a snippet of context. It is then possible to select specific instances from the list of results and apply a different (or newly created) tag to just these, which greatly facilitates the splitting and merging of tags. It is also possible to click through from the results list to the source text itself, in case the wider context needs to be considered, or if a more complex alteration of the tagging is necessary.

However, one functionality that is sorely missing from the version of CATMA used for this study is the facility to reorganise the hierarchy. It is not, unfortunately, possible to reassign an existing tag to a different category. In the case of tags on the lowest level (the codes of my analysis), this could be worked around by retrieving all instances of the old tag and retagging them with a new tag created in a different place in the hierarchy. However, if the tag carries a property, or if it belongs to a higher tier of the hierarchy (a category in my analysis), then this operation would have to be iterated for every subordinate tag and for every value of its property. For this reason, I have chosen not to take advantage of hierarchisation in CATMA at all, and instead, I have set up my code names (2.3 and Box 3) to include the higher hierarchical levels. In this way, the hierarchy can be reorganised simply by changing the names of the affected codes in the tag list itself.

While CATMA includes some analytical utilities, it does not cater for the intensive quantitative analyses I intended to pursue in the final phase. Moreover, I needed to analyse my codes of descriptive content in conjunction with the text and description metadata, and CATMA at present provides only very rudimentary means of analysing combinations of codes. I therefore exported all my code data from CATMA and processed them further in spreadsheet software (3.7), specifically Microsoft Excel, although here too other applications could certainly have been used.

2.8 Interpretation

The codes applied to the text are analytical constructs. Thanks to the effort invested in the qualitative stage, they may be accepted as passably valid approximations of the meaning that the texts evoked in the minds of their intended audiences, but even so, they are more abstract than the original texts. This is already true for the most granular level of individual codes, and all the more so for the higher levels of the coding hierarchy, namely categories and dimen-

sions. Each code collapses a spectrum of meanings and each category or dimension unites several discrete codes. To facilitate the detection of larger-scale patterns, all low-level detail is obscured, both as regards semantics (e.g. nuances, connotations, associative chains) and as regards the form of expression (e.g. length or brevity, sophistication, verse and poetic devices).

This is indeed the point of data reduction, but while interpreting the findings, one must remain aware that the data are reduced and that their creation involved interpretation. The findings of the quantitative phase usually benefit from elaboration by reaching back to lower levels of abstraction, and indeed to the concrete texts (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 15, 138). Thankfully, textual analysis does not only generate reduced data but also maintains accurate linking between these and the raw original data, allowing the researcher to zoom in and out from patterns at various levels of abstraction to the intricate detail in the texts. Working in a digital environment, this kind of ‘scalable reading’ (Horstmann 2020, 158–162) requires little effort and offers great returns.

The samples obtained by partitioning the analytical data on the basis of metadata are not discrete and internally coherent descriptions but pastiches cobbled together from a motley crowd of texts describing diverse personages. The actual descriptive passages contributing to them may be idiosyncratic at some points and repeat boilerplate phrases by rote at others. Attribution frequency within a sample ignores how many individuals are represented in that sample, how many distinct descriptive passages the sample was culled from, or how many disparate grants those passages belong to. Whatever frequency measures characterise the sample as a whole are not necessarily applicable to all, or indeed any, subdivisions of that sample, as different subsets of the sample may have contributed in different ways to the global figure. The sample is like the storied average human being who has one ovary and one testicle. Analysis thus involves two kinds of self-imposed selective blindness: to any subtleties of meaning below the currently applied hierarchical tier of the coding frame on the one hand, and to differentiation of the sample by any factors other than the selection criteria on the other.

When two groups are to be compared, uneven sample size also becomes an issue. For instance, in my aggregated data, there are about twenty attributions of physical beauty to women, and about fifty to men. As is intuitively obvious, this does not mean that the texts put more emphasis on physical beauty in the representation of men than in that of women. On the whole, the inscriptions lavish far more attention on men than on women, so the figures must be relativised. The relative prevalence of a dimension (or other item of the coding hierarchy) is the proportion of attributions in that di-

mension (or other item) to the sum of attributions (in all dimensions or other items relevant to the analysis) present in any given sample, expressed as a percentage. Looking at relative prevalence, it turns out that physical beauty constitutes over fifteen percent of the characterisation of women, but barely more than one percent of the characterisation of men.³³

The two blind spots discussed above continue to apply, and to interact, in comparisons. Because of the second—the invisibility of factors other than the selection criteria—when the prevalence of a trait (such as physical beauty) is found to be different in two samples divided on the basis of some criterion (such as focus type), this does not necessarily mean that the criterion is directly correlated with the trait. The finding may be confounded by a different independent variable which has a stronger correlation with the trait, but which incidentally covaries with the criterion.³⁴ Similarly, if the prevalence of a trait is found to be similar in two samples, it is still possible that the criterion has a bearing on the trait, but this manifests differently in different parts of the samples, and the differences cancel out.³⁵ Even if this is not the case, the first blind spot—the invisibility of detail lower down in the hierarchy—means that the composition of the dimension being studied may be different in the two samples.³⁶ Repeating the comparison on subdivisions of the samples (along a second criterion judged to be potentially pertinent) can help confirm whether the samples are homogeneous with re-

³³ See also Figure 7 for the comparison of male and female profiles. Physical beauty is one of the factors contributing to the dimension of Appeal.

³⁴ For example, physical beauty is never attributed to ritualist foci with their satellites, but it has some prevalence among dignitary foci with their satellites. This is primarily because the former group includes no women at all, while the latter does, and not because a dashing figure is irrelevant in a Brahmin ritualist—although it is, since attributions of masculine beauty are also absent in that group while being present in sovereigns.

³⁵ In a hypothetical scenario comparing some dignitaries and some sovereigns, we might find attributions of Intellect and Belligerence to be equally prevalent in both. (In the actual corpus of Veṅgī Cālukya data, Intellect is much more prevalent in dignitaries, and Belligerence is more characteristic of sovereigns.) But hidden behind similar levels of prevalence, most sovereigns might be represented with a mix of traits involving middling levels of both, while the dignitaries might include ministers and generals with the former being described as tremendously intellectual and not at all belligerent, and the latter the other way round.

³⁶ In the above hypothetical scenario, the Intellect of kings may consist largely of a single trait (such as knowledge of statecraft), repeatedly asserted in many eulogies, while that of ministers may manifest as attributions of a colourful mix of wisdom, wit and learn- edness. See Figure 8 for the actual factors contributing to Intellect in the studied corpus.

spect to the trait being examined, and further analysis involving lower levels of the coding hierarchy can show how the factors contributing to a dimension differ in different samples. However, due to the limited size of the coded corpus, neither samples nor codes can be subdivided many times before any potentially present ‘signal’ becomes undetectable in the ‘noise’ of idiosyncratic variation. This takes us back to scalable reading: broad patterns identified through quantitative analysis on a massive scale are subject to qualification and elaboration through closer and closer reading on increasingly smaller scales.

3. Method

3.1 The procedure at a glance

My approach may be classified as Mixed Methods research of the Exploratory Sequential type (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 52), in which the data are first explored and analysed in a qualitative way, and the findings of this phase are then used to develop an ‘instrument’—in the present case a coding frame—for the second, quantitative phase. The use of qualitative data to inform quantitative instruments is in fact so widespread in the social sciences that it may even be regarded as the standard approach to instrument development rather than a Mixed Methods approach in the stricter sense (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 198).

My workflow comprised three major stages. In the first, preparatory phase, I created XML documents containing each of the texts to be analysed, and encoded the text metadata and some basic text structure in these (3.2). I then skimmed the texts, demarcating descriptive passages within each (3.3) and encoding the description metadata for these (3.4). For the second stage, that of content coding and qualitative analysis, I imported the above XML files into CATMA. Within this analytical software tool, I closely read the previously highlighted descriptive passages and tagged individual attributions with representational codes (3.5). In the course of this, I continuously expanded and repeatedly revised my coding frame (3.6). For the third and final stage, that of quantitative analysis, I once again moved outside CATMA to be able to investigate the patterns in which representational codes correlate with particular kinds of persons or particular properties of documents (3.7).

3.2 *Priming texts for analysis*

As raw material for my analysis, I used what I call a ‘curated text’ of each inscription. This retains only the text as an abstract entity, discarding information encoded in the digital editions about its material aspect (such as the position or number of line breaks or copperplate pages) and editorial interpretation (such as reading difficulties and semantic encoding). It includes editorial restorations of illegible or lost parts of the original text, without distinction from the actually preserved text. If an editor has indicated more than one possible reading for an unclear character or sequence, only the first alternative is retained. Where the editor has emended an error in the original text, only the editorial version is present in the curated text; however, editorial normalisation of non-standard language has been discarded in favour of the original content.³⁷

Such a curated text can be derived automatically from DHARMA digital editions.³⁸ For the small number of texts which I have analysed but for which no DHARMA edition is available, I used e-texts created by others as a starting point, and transformed them into something approaching a curated text through some global replacements and manual editing. The actual minutiae of the text serving as raw material for analysis do not matter, so long as it is reasonably readable and comprehensible, and not too cluttered with extraneous elements such as various parentheses or other editorial markup. Because I used a curated text, I did in some cases have to look up the proper edition in order to make better sense of corrupt or damaged sections. This would not have been necessary if my raw material had included philological markup in some form. However, this was more than compensated for by the ease of reading the large majority of stretches, and by the

³⁷ By emendation I mean an editorial correction of orthography or grammar where the received reading is deemed by the editor to be a mistake of the composer or the engraver; for instance, when a received *giva* is corrected to *śiva*, or *te gatau* to *tau gatau*. Conversely, by normalisation I mean the editorial substitution of a standard-language form for a received non-standard form that is believed to reflect the normal language usage of the composer, such as normalising *satva* to *sattva* or *mahārājā* to *mahārāja*. See Balogh and Griffiths (2020, sec. 6.1) for further details of the distinction in DHARMA editorial practice. My choice to discard editorial normalisations was an arbitrary one, made on the basis of a vague inclination to respect the original text so long as it is intelligible.

³⁸ An XSL transformation scenario for this purpose will be made available with the publication of my technical account (Balogh in preparation).

facility of searching for text segments in the course of semi-automated analytical tagging.³⁹

To these raw curated texts, I applied a bespoke XML encoding⁴⁰ with three functions. First, each document was set up with a header and a body section. The header, analogous to the head of an HTML file (and, loosely, to the header of a TEI document), describes what the files are, should they be retrieved in the future from an archive. Second, XML elements within the body section encoded the basic semantic structure of each text, breaking them up into prose paragraphs and verse stanzas. This is helpful when the texts are displayed for analytical coding and, as the stanzas are numbered, it also facilitates consulting the original edition or an earlier translation.⁴¹ Neither the header nor the structural markup are thus essential for analysis, but both could very easily be derived algorithmically from the DHARMA editions and added with little effort to the non-DHARMA texts.

The third function of this encoding, one that is essential for subsequent analysis, is to record metadata for each text. The text metadata (conceptually introduced in 2.6) were implemented as attributes on an XML element containing the text as a whole. Some of these metadata could be automatically prefilled by the transformation scenario on the basis of information in the TEI header of the DHARMA EpiDoc editions. The rest of the text metadata either required manual revision after partial prefilling, or had to be supplied manually. Box 7 below illustrates the XML encoding of the text and metadata shown in Box 6 above for the Bologna plates.

³⁹ On second thought, preferring normalised readings to non-standard received readings would have made this even easier.

⁴⁰ These XML files and the XSD schema defining this encoding will also be made available with my technical account (Balogh in preparation).

⁴¹ The information represented in the structural markup also makes it possible to distinguish prose and verse descriptions in analysis if desired, although I have not yet done so and may never use this distinction.

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<xml xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
xsi:noNamespaceSchemaLocation="cata.xsd">
  <head>
    <title>Bologna plates of A</title>
  </head>
  <body>
    <text textID="Xmpl00001" title="Bologna plates of A" corpus="DynX"
      issuer="KingA" date="2023" dateMargin="0" sect="Pastafarian" incomplete="yes"
      textRemark="probably spurious">
      <prose>The majestic and sovereign King A, the protector of subjects,
      born in the exalted dynasty X favoured by the gods, son of the just King B and
      grandson of King C, the triumphant wielder of the sword, grants a village to the
      learned and wise Brahmin P, son of the venerable and adept Brahmin Q.
    </prose>
    </text>
  </body>
</xml>

```

Box 7. Text structure and metadata encoded as XML

3.3 Demarcating descriptive passages

For the purpose of textual analysis, descriptions are germane insofar as they contain one or more attributions pertaining to a person whose representation is to be analysed. The accurate identification of attributions, however, only takes place in the subsequent phase of close reading. The practical criteria for demarcating a descriptive passage are that it must contain some substantial characterisation (2.2) of an entity relevant to the analysis, and that it must not contain any substantial characterisation of any other entity who is relevant to the analysis. This definition deliberately allows the inclusion of text other than substantial characterisation. Doing so, in addition to speeding up the demarcation of descriptions by relegating case-by-case judgement to the stage of close reading, allows the majority of descriptions to be semantically complete. This in turn facilitates content coding by eliminating the need to look for context outside the descriptive passage in the course of close reading.

Box 8 below shows some snippets of English text to illustrate the demarcation of descriptive passages. Within the snippets, substantial characterisation is indicated with a yellow highlight, insubstantial characterisation with green, and documentary propositions with blue. Descriptions are enclosed

in a frame, the focus of a description is indicated by bold type and the target of a description by an underline. In snippets 1 and 3, there is no substantial characterisation whatsoever, so there are no descriptions. Snippet 2, while similar to snippet 1, does contain substantial characterisation of Brahmin P, so this snippet is a description, which has Brahmin P as its focus and target. The documentary details of his father Brahmin Q are encompassed within that description, since Q is not characterised. Likewise, snippet 4, while similar to snippet 3, substantially characterises King B, and is thus a description with King B as focus and target.

1. the Brahmin **P**, son of the Brahmin Q of the G *gotra*
2. the **learned** and **wise** **Brahmin P**, son of Brahmin Q of the G *gotra*
3. **King B** was crowned on 1 April 2007, then reigned for sixteen years.
4. **King B** was crowned on 1 April 2007, then reigned **justly** for sixteen years.

Box 8. Judging whether a passage is a description

Once it has been ascertained that a legitimate description is present in the text at a certain locus, the beginning and end of that description must be located and tagged in XML. Many descriptions are easy to demarcate and, as shown above, erring on the side of generosity does no harm. However, while semantically complete descriptions are convenient for close reading, semantical completeness is not a requirement for descriptions and is indeed often impossible to achieve.

From the perspective of this analytical method, a descriptive passage is not equivalent to all that a particular text may say about a particular person. On the one hand, descriptive passages are tagged in the same XML file that encodes the prose and verse structural units of the text (3.2), so the markup for descriptions cannot overlap the markup for structure. As a consequence, a semantically coherent descriptive passage that extends over a boundary between structural units must be treated as two (or more) separate description items. This is a minor inconvenience of my implementation, which could be circumvented in a number of ways, but the benefits of doing so were not deemed worth the costs.

On the other hand, descriptions must also not overlap with other descriptions. Thus, a separate description element must be created wherever an ongoing description switches to substantial characterisation of an entity who is relevant to the analysis and different from the target of the current

description. Conversely, propositions concerning entities other than the target of a description may be safely included within that description so long as those propositions do not constitute substantial characterisation, or so long as those other entities are not themselves subjects of the analysis.⁴²

Box 9, using the same notation as Box 8 above, illustrates the demarcation of descriptions in slightly more complex cases. Here, snippets 1 and 2 are similar to snippets 1 and 2 of Box 8. However, the present snippet 1 includes substantial characterisation, so there is a description here. The target of that description is Brahmin Q, but its focus is nonetheless Brahmin P, who is a protagonist (donee) of the grant, while Q is his satellite. In snippet 2, conversely, both the Brahmins are characterised substantially, so there are two separate descriptions. Both have Brahmin P as their focus, but the target of the first one is P, while that of the second is Q.

Finally, characterisation of an entity irrelevant to the analysis or insubstantial characterisation of a relevant entity can in some cases count as an attribution pertaining to the target of the ongoing description. For example, antagonists are not legitimate targets in my analytical framework, but when a vanquished enemy or rival is described as formidable, this is understood as an attribution of a particular kind of dominance to the protagonist (/DOM:enemyEminent). Thus, in snippet 3 of Box 9, the enemy E is not relevant to the analysis, but his description constitutes substantial characterisation of King A, who is the focus and target of the descriptive passage in this snippet. As another example, lineages of protagonists are legitimate description targets, but vague attributions of eminence to such entities are deemed to be insubstantial (2.2). However, when a focus person's family or *gotra* is asserted to be famous, excellent, etc., this is understood as an attribution of eminence to the focus person (/EMI:pedigree), rather than as a separate description of the satellite collective entity, as in snippet 4, where the qualification of the *gotra* as renowned is insubstantial as applied to the *gotra*, but the claim of belonging to a renowned *gotra* does constitute substantial characterisation of Brahmin P, who is the focus and target of the descriptive passage in this snippet. Conversely, in snippet 5, the hero H's family F receives substantial characterisation (in being compared to an ocean) in addition to being vaguely praised. There are thus two separate descriptions here, both with H as focus: the target of the first one is H, while the target of the second is his family.

⁴² Entities who are not relevant to the analysis but are occasionally described in the texts typically include antagonists, armies and divine beings.

1. the **Brahmin P**, son of the adept Brahmin **Q** of the G *gotra*
2. the **learned** and **wise Brahmin P**, son of the adept Brahmin **Q** of the G *gotra*
3. **King A**, who **slew** the mighty enemy **E**
4. the **Brahmin P** of the renowned G *gotra*
5. the **heroic H** was born **like the moon** from
the **ocean** which is the **majestic Family F**

Box 9. Separating descriptive passages by target

The requirement of separating descriptions by target necessitates precise attention in some cases, where attributions concerning two or more targets are staggered in quick alternation. Occasionally, chunks of text describing different people (especially, but not solely, in quick alternation) may even share a vowel that has been merged in sandhi. The boundary between the descriptions must be set arbitrarily in such cases. Its exact placement does not matter, provided that it is likewise observed in the subsequent coding of representational content.⁴³ My practice has been to treat merged vowels as the initial vowel of the post-sandhi word.

In Box 10, excerpt 1⁴⁴ is a verse line in which a king and his wife are compared to gods, with descriptions targeting the king shown in black type, and those targeting the queen in red. Excerpt 2⁴⁵ is a similar staccato involving a nobleman (shown in purple), his father (in black) and his mother (in red). Here, two description boundaries are affected by vowel fusion (*umeśayoh* and *śacīndrayoh*), and the boundary was arbitrarily drawn before the fused vowel.

⁴³ This is necessary for the manipulation of the data whereby description metadata are passed down to the representational data (3.7).

⁴⁴ VengiCalukya00040, v. 6, ‘His queen (crowned) with the turban—as Padmā (Lakṣmī) to Viṣṇu, as (Pārvatī) the daughter of the Mountain to Śambhu (Śiva) ...’ See the note at the beginning of the References section about inscription identifiers involving the string VengiCalukya.

⁴⁵ VengiCalukya00087, v. 8, ‘As the Six-faced (Skanda) [was born] of Umā and Īśa, [as] Jayanta [was born] of Śacī and Indra ...’

1. *viṣṇoḥ padmeva śāmbhor iva giri-tanayā yasya devī sa-paṭṭā*
2. *umēśayoḥ śaṇmukhavaj jayantaḥ śacīndrayoḥ*

Box 10. Staggered descriptive passages

3.4 Adding description metadata

Descriptions were tagged manually in the XML files created for the analysis, using XML elements with attributes representing the description metadata (conceptually introduced in 2.4 and 2.5), as illustrated in Box 11, which shows the encoding of the text and metadata from Box 5 (section 2.4), supplemented with the ID of non-ritualist targets. Each document was quickly skimmed to determine where descriptions are present and what metadata are applicable to each description. Mistakes made at this stage can be corrected in the course of close reading with some extra labour, as the corrections then have to be made both in the input XML files and in the corpus already imported into CATMA.

```
<prose>
  <description focus="sovereign" orbit="self" ID="A">The majestic and sovereign
  King A, the protector of subjects</description>, born in <description
  focus="sovereign" orbit="lineage">the exalted dynasty X favoured by the
  gods</description>, son of <description focus="sovereign" orbit="father"
  ID="B">the just King B</description> and grandson of <description
  focus="sovereign" orbit="grandfather" ID="C">King C, the triumphant wielder
  of the sword</description>, grants a village to <description focus="ritualist"
  orbit="self">the learned and wise Brahmin P</description>, son of
  <description focus="ritualist" orbit="father">the venerable and adept
  Brahmin Q</description>.
</prose>
```

Box 11. Description metadata encoded as XML

The translations I had previously written for DHARMA were frequently consulted to ascertain who is being described at a particular point. If this kind of work were to be undertaken without reliable translations, the time required for tagging descriptions could be significant, since one would then have to read, comprehend and largely keep in mind a much longer portion of text while encoding the metadata of each description.

In general, the metadata items pertaining to a description can be determined confidently from the text, and uncertainty arising from unintelligible or poorly preserved texts can be recorded in the metadata for the identification of the target and the orbit occupied by the target (2.5). Sometimes, when the description of a focus person is adjacent to (or imbricated with) the description of one of his satellites (most often his father), attributions may apply to either of these targets. This kind of vagueness, which is not uncommon in copperplate charters, was resolved arbitrarily. Ambiguous attributions were assigned to targets on the basis of grammatical agreement when possible, even if such assignment went against intuition.⁴⁶ In grammatically equivocal cases, intuition, cognate texts and, when all else failed, proximity were relied on. Since the focus is the same in either case, the difference here is only relevant to analyses that distinguish between orbits.

3.5 Recognising, demarcating and coding attributions

As noted above (2.2 and 3.3), documentary data and insubstantial characterisation do not qualify as a description when occurring in isolation. The tagging of descriptions thus served as a preliminary screening, disqualifying from the analysis any parts of the text that contain no relevant substantial characterisation. Documentary data and insubstantial characterisation are, however, encompassed within descriptions when they occur in company with substantial characterisation. In such a context, insubstantial characterisation was usually given full recognition as attribution. Thus, the prefix *śrī*, for instance, was in such cases interpreted as an attribution of majesty (/PRE:majesty), equivalent to the adjective *śrīmat*, and claims of being (or wishing to be) an ornament to the dynasty were recognised as attributions of excellence (/EMI:excellence).

⁴⁶ Thus, for instance, in the passage *veda-vedāmga-vidē rudraśarmanah pauṭrāya svakarmānuṣṭhāna-nipunāya yajñaśarmanah putrāya veda-vedāmgetihāsa-purāṇa-pāragāya catuṣṣaṣṭi-kalābhijñāya ... golaśarmanane* (VengiCalukya00018), my intuition informed by numerous parallels says that *veda-vedāmga-vidē* was meant to qualify Rudraśarman and *sva-karmānuṣṭhāna-nipunāya* was meant to qualify Yajñaśarman (i.e. that *-vidō* and *-nipunāya* were intended). But since the grammar is standard and unambiguous, this intuition was overridden, and the entire passage was understood to describe Golaśarman redundantly as both *veda-vedāmga-vid* and *veda-vedāmgetihāsa-purāṇa-pāragā*.

Names, epithets and titles comprise a kind of twilight zone between documentary information and characterisation. As a rule of thumb, the primary designation used for a person within any particular passage was always regarded as documentary. Such a primary designation is most often a proper name. Thus, when the Eastern Cālukya rulers called Vijayāditya and Bhīma are mentioned by name, this was never interpreted as an attribution of being like the sun (*āditya*) and being triumphant (*vijaya*-), or of being fearsome (*bhīma*). Less commonly, a term that is elsewhere used as an epithet may also occur as a primary designation in lieu of a personal name.⁴⁷ Epithets were ignored in such cases, but recognised as characterisation when they were featured in addition to a personal name or other primary designation.⁴⁸

Titles affixed to names were usually recognised as attributions, especially when the same name is also known to occur with a different suffix or without one. Conversely, a title seems to be an integral component of some names, and thus does not merit recognition as an attribution.⁴⁹ Some donees who seem to be commoners also bear names involving *rāja*,⁵⁰ and although this may be an implicit attribution of superiority, I have chosen not to treat these as attributions of a royal title.

Once the analyst has concluded that a certain trait relevant to the analysis is attributed at a certain point in the text, the attribution is assigned an analytical code. In the present section, I discuss analytical coding as if the codebook were a priori given, but it must be kept in mind that in the course of actual content coding, the codebook remains malleable and is subject to repeated revisions as presented in 3.6 below. Analytical coding was implemented in CATMA (2.7), using the tags managed within this software, illustrated in Figure 2.

⁴⁷ For example, the Veṅgī Cālukya ruler Maṅgi-yuvarāja is often called only Sarvalokāśraya, ‘the shelter of all the world’ in his own grants, e.g. VengiCalukya00072, ‘His Majesty King Sarvalokāśraya, who surpasses the virtues of his father...’ (... *sama-tiśayita-pitr-guṇaḥ* ... *śrī-sarvalokāśraya-mahārājaḥ*).

⁴⁸ For example VengiCalukya00019, ‘His Majesty the supremely pious King Viṣṇu-varḍhana, shelter of all the world, supreme devotee of Maheśvara ...’ (*parama-brahmaṇyaḥ parama-māheśvaraḥ sarva-lokāśraya-śrī-viṣṇuvarddhana-mahārājaḥ*).

⁴⁹ An example is, again, Maṅgi-yuvarāja (also Maṅgi-dogarāja). When he is called by this name (as a reigning monarch), I did not interpret it to be an attribution of the status of *yuvarāja*.

⁵⁰ For example, the soldier Vemarāja in VengiCalukya00027, or the courtier Rāja-bhīma in VengiCalukya00040, who seems to have been named after the Eastern Cālukya king Bhīma II.

The length and content of the text segment to which a particular tag is linked are irrelevant to quantitative analysis: in principle, analytical codes could be attached to single characters⁵¹ at or near the relevant locus. It is, however, desirable for the codes to be attached to a semantic unit long enough to be intelligible. Thereby, the cue on the basis of which a code was assigned is clearly discernible even while looking only at the extracted data, without the need to refer back to the context of each code. This is especially convenient for the qualitative phase of the analysis, but is also useful for detecting coding errors at any later stage of the work and for the transparency of the published data.



Figure 2. Analytical tagging in CATMA 6

The minimal segment of text that can comprise an attribution is, accordingly, a single word or compound member.⁵² However, many attributions take the form of a compound word, a phrase, or, occasionally, a more or less complete sentence. Thus, when a queen is introduced as

⁵¹ Or, if not using CATMA, the codes could be zero-width empty elements.

⁵² As already noted for descriptions (section 3.3 and Box 10), attributions too may be closely staggered and sometimes two attributions share a vowel fused in sandhi. Although the standoff implementation of CATMA tags permits overlap, I preferred to avoid this and tagged incomplete words in such cases.

Melāmbā, who possessed effulgence, acclaim, intelligence, majesty, steadfastness and forbearance⁵³

—every word in this list of qualities is an attribution.⁵⁴ Conversely, when a text says about a minister that

in his house [even] the parrots and mynahs recite the Vedas and treatises, because they hear them ever and anon [being recited] by clever pupils⁵⁵

—all of this is a single attribution, namely of teaching activity.⁵⁶

The selection of the appropriate code requires close reading, in the course of which the immediate textual context must be carefully considered while keeping in mind the historical context, the research interest and the coding frame. Many of the attributions made in copperplate eulogies are straightforward and explicit; indeed, searching the aggregated descriptive passages for specific words can be extremely helpful in consistently tagging attributions. Nonetheless, the results of such a word search must always be examined individually: many words almost always mean the same concept and need only to be checked for false positives,⁵⁷ but many signify different concepts depending on context. For example, when a target is likened to the ocean, this may be an assertion of greatness (/EMI:greatness) or one of profound wisdom (/INT:profundity), and the appropriate code must be selected on the basis of clues in the context, which may be direct (such as the explicit presence of *mahīman* or *agāḍhatā* in the simile) or indirect (attainable only through a vague ‘feel’ for the tone of the text). Mentioning *śakti* may indicate power or capacity in general (/COM:capacity), but it may in some cases mean simply a spear (/PRO:weapon), or be part of a reference to the three kingly powers (/COM:capacity:saktitraya).

⁵³ VengiCalukya00032, *melāmbāyām dyuti-nuti-mati-śrī-dhṛti-kṣāntimatyaṁ*.

⁵⁴ The applicable codes are /APP:beauty; /PRE:reputation; /INT:intelligence; /PRE:majesty; /COM:steadfastness; /MOR:patience.

⁵⁵ VengiCalukya00049, *nityākaraṇanayā saśvad vaṭubhiḥ paṭubhir ggrbe veda-śāstrāṇi yad-dhāmnī paṭhanti śuka-sārikāḥ*.

⁵⁶ /INT:teaching.

⁵⁷ For instance, the substantive *mati* always or almost always cues /INT:intelligence as in note 53 above, but a mechanical search for this string will also retrieve its occurrences in the words *bhramati*, *śrīmati*, or *samatikrānta*.

This kind of reflection is even more essential for verbose characterisation, when one must also judge how many discrete attributions are being made, and how much of the text is just icing on the cake as far as the attributions are concerned. I might point for illustration to the claim that a ruler receives homage from other rulers. Widespread in mediaeval Indian inscriptions, this assertion often recurs in the Veṅgī Cālukya *prāśastis* with very similar phrasing usually involving the transference of light from the crowns of others to the feet of our hero. This may be depicted, for instance, as

whose footstool was coloured by the gems in the diadems of kings⁵⁸

—a flowery way of expressing a single attribution, which I classify as an indication of dominance (/DOM:homage). The details are often different and may be elaborated at more length, but with regard to this concept, it is irrelevant whether those paying homage are said to be rulers or subordinates, whether the transference of light is featured or not, or whether the process involves the footstool, feet or toenails of the hero. Thus, the following expression still carries the same attribution:

whose pair of lotus feet were engilded by a mass of stamen dust (i.e. pollen) from the garlands on the brows of many vassals⁵⁹

However, the elaboration of details does in many cases introduce additional concepts, whereby certain elements of the vignette become separate attributions. Familiarity with related texts sensitises the reader to the kinds of attributions they tend to make, thus making it possible to recognise those attributions when intertwined with another one, such as the depiction of homage. For example, when a king is described as

whose pair of feet are tinted by the hues of the rays from the gems fitted to the crowns of enemy kings bowed down by the blade of his own sword⁶⁰

—then, by my understanding, there are no fewer than three additional attributions present beside that of homage. The explicit mention of ‘enemy

⁵⁸ VengiCalukya00052, *kṣoṇīśa-mauli-maṇi-rañjita-pāda-pīṭhaḥ*.

⁵⁹ VengiCalukya00083, *aneka-sāmanta-mauli-mālā-makaranda-rajah-puñjapiñjara-rita-caraṇāravinda-dvayasya*.

⁶⁰ VengiCalukya00080, *svāsi-dhārā-namita-ripu-nṛpati-makūṭa-ghaṭita-maṇikirāṇa-rāga-rañjita-caraṇa-yugalāḥ*.

kings bowed down’ expresses dominance in a different way than the mere reception of homage does, bringing in the element of subjugation (/DOM:subjugation). Indeed, references to the subjugation of enemies often occur without being juxtaposed to scenes of homage, indicating that these are two ontologically distinct claims, even though in my categorisation both are understood to indicate dominance. Perhaps less straightforward is the separation of ‘the blade of his sword’ from the above two attributions. However, since similar images in other texts may lack an explicit reference to a weapon, while weapons may also be mentioned in different contexts, I understand their explicit mention as a metaphor of martial prowess (/PRO:weapon), a class of qualities that I distinguish from dominance. Least conspicuous is the presence of the qualification ‘his own,’ which is in fact even less emphatic in Sanskrit than in English.⁶¹ Nevertheless, having closely read a large number of Eastern Cālukya *prasaṅgas*, I am now convinced that *sva* or *nija* is quite frequently used as part of a compound or phrase indicating that the ruler in question is worthy of the crown by right of his own competence (/COM:worthiness), rather than merely by right of succession. This attribution of personal aptitude may, of course, also take place in contexts other than that of subjugation.⁶²

A different depiction of homage may bring in different additional attributions. The passage

whose pair of feet are tinted by the hues of the rays from the gems fitted to the surfaces of the crowns of all the enemy kings bowed down by fear of the power of his arms⁶³

looks much like the previously cited example, yet differs from it in some details. The addition of ‘surface’ serves only the elaboration of the image and

⁶¹ Sanskrit normally uses the reflexive possessive pronoun *sva* (or the equivalent adjective *nija*), rather than a personal or demonstrative pronoun, for referring to a possession of the logical subject of a sentence (Speijer 1886, 198–199). Thus, *svāsi* (etc.) can correspond to the English phrase ‘his sword’ as well as to ‘his own sword.’

⁶² It frequently appears at or near the commencement of the description of a ruler immediately following a description of one of his predecessors, expressed for example by claiming in general that the king was in no way inferior to his predecessor (e.g. *sva-pitṛ anūna-guṇa*), or it may foreground a particular trait such as good conduct (*sva-carita*) or political skill (*sva-naya*).

⁶³ VengiCalukya00054, *bhūja-bala-bhaya-namitāśeṣa-ripu-nṛpati-makūṭa-taṭaghaṭita-maṇi-kiraṇa-rāga-ramjita-caraṇa-yugalāḥ*.

poetic sound play, but I find that the qualification ‘all’ added to ‘enemy kings’ changes that particular indication of dominance to an attribution of being a supreme sovereign (/DOM:paramountcy), which is distinct from the attribution of mere subjugation. Likewise, martial prowess is here indicated not by mentioning a weapon but through ‘the power of his arms,’ an attribution of physical strength (/PRO:brawn). An additional aspect of this description is the introduction of ‘fear,’ i.e. the assertion that he intimidates his enemies, which I count as an indication of belligerence (/BEL:intimidation).

3.6 Progressive coding cycles

The coding frame—including the distinctions between individual codes as well as the hierarchy into which they are organised—was constructed and refined over a series of revisions, essentially involving three cycles of coding. I started out with a simple preliminary codebook that I had devised earlier (Balogh 2023a) on the basis of theoretical considerations and the close reading of a small sample of texts, for investigating whether rulers are represented differently in Buddhist and ‘Hindu’ grants.⁶⁴ It involved five dimensions of representation, labelled Martiality (4 traits), Superhumanity (3 traits), Sovereignty (3 traits), Ability (3 traits) and Morality (8 traits).

In the pilot phase of the present qualitative analysis, I began to read my texts closely, and judged each attribution I encountered.⁶⁵ Attributions precisely covered by an existing code were simply tagged with that code. Attributions sufficiently similar to an existing code were subsumed in that code, moulding its definition on the fly if necessary. For any attributions which I felt were not satisfactorily covered by an already existing code, a new code was created. I generally aimed to grasp concepts at some level of abstraction, but at this stage I deliberately kept the codes quite granular.⁶⁶ That is to say, erring on the side of distinction, ‘splitting,’ was preferable to overgeneralisa-

⁶⁴ I have also approached the same question with the more refined methodology presented here (Balogh in press 2025).

⁶⁵ Schreier (2012, 115–117) discusses this strategy of progressive coding by the name ‘subsumption.’

⁶⁶ Qualitative analyses typically commence coding in this manner, often (especially in the Grounded Theory method) called open coding or initial coding. See Schreier (2012, 111–124) about first-cycle coding in general, Saldaña (2016, 115–119) about initial/open coding, and Charmaz (2014, 116–132) specifically about its role in Grounded Theory.

tion, ‘lumping.’⁶⁷ For some expressions that were hard to grasp by a more abstract concept, I employed ‘in vivo codes’: labels based on the term(s) used in the original text.⁶⁸

Having completed a first pass in this way on twenty texts of my corpus of 87 inscriptions,⁶⁹ I sat down to review and revise the coding frame. According to Antony Bryant (2017, 118), codes ‘defined in the early stages of a project will almost certainly not last in the same form throughout the analysis and later stages of data sampling: yet they are essential products in providing the basis and spur to later parts of the process.’ Thus, the insights gained in the course of the first coding cycle allowed me at this stage to merge some of the overly granular codes, establishing a single, slightly more abstract code to serve the function previously served by two separate codes. Conversely, codes that had turned out to be too abstract were now split up into more concrete ones. On a more generic level, the same insights gave a better understanding of the thematic classification of the specific codes. Many codes that had previously been free-floating could now be assigned to more or less coherent categories and dimensions, and the hierarchy of these dimensions and categories could be reconsidered.⁷⁰

In the second coding cycle, the initial body of texts was reread to make sure that the revised coding system was applied correctly. Coding was then continued to the end of the Veṅgī Cālukya corpus. As before, I made some changes to the coding frame on the fly and kept introducing new codes whenever I found the already existing ones insufficient. I also kept notes of the various flashes of doubt and insight that occurred while closely reading through all the descriptions. Once the second cycle was completed on all texts, I returned yet again to the coding frame to finalise my set of codes and to attempt to establish a set of dimensions that integrate the codes on a

⁶⁷ See for example Guest et al. (2012, 75–76) for a summary of the issue of lumping versus splitting in coding.

⁶⁸ See for example Saldaña (2016, 105–110) about in vivo coding. Some in vivo codes, especially for branches of /INT:education, survive into the mature codebook.

⁶⁹ Tallying the total number of attributions, these twenty texts comprised roughly 15% of my final dataset. The texts coded in this preliminary stage are included within that final dataset. The first twenty texts were all chronologically early; with hindsight, a more diverse set, and one that better represents the corpus as a whole, ought to have been selected for the first cycle of coding (e.g. Schreier 2012, 149).

⁷⁰ This stage of my analysis incorporates features of the processes that Grounded Theory calls focused coding (Saldaña 2016, 239–244; Charmaz 2014, 138–147) and axial coding (Saldaña 2016, 244–250; Charmaz 2014, 147–150). See also Bryant (2017, 96–97) for general thoughts about constant comparison and iterative coding cycles.

more abstract level with acceptable accuracy. As in the first phase of conceptual classification, finalisation of the codes involved the merging of some previously introduced codes (especially in cases where a particular code had only one or two instances throughout the corpus), the splitting of some insufficiently distinctive codes, and a revision of the hierarchical setup of the coding frame. I tried out many small (and some larger) variations of the conceptual scheme in order to maximise coherence within categories and dimensions while minimising similarity between them, attempting as it were to carve up representational content at its joints.

After settling on what I deemed to be a good enough set of codes and classes, I read through all the texts in a final iteration of the coding process. This was not a close and attentive reading of the entire material, but rather a final step of tidying. I removed all instances of double-coding where, through semi-automatic tagging, more than one code had been applied to a text segment. I paid special attention to some of the codes that I had changed in the final revision of the coding frame, and I skimmed through all of the coded text, but only scrutinised random parts of it more closely.

The data at this stage were ready for quantitative analysis, and the structure of my coding frame—as sketched in 2.3—provided a fair map for navigating most of the themes deployed for the representation of protagonists in my textual corpus. However, even after this point, the organisation of the coding frame can be reconsidered and reorganised as required by current research interest and as informed by new insights. So long as the definitions of individual codes remain unchanged, re-sorting codes into different hierarchies does not require a rereading of the text and can be implemented with minimum labour.⁷¹ Indeed, the final coding frame in my dataset⁷² is in fact a result of yet another post-hoc revision, which was made in the course of working with the quantitative data and which affected only the hierarchy of categories. Conversely, the introduction of new codes (either through splitting existing codes, through lumping existing codes, or through adding new concepts) does require some revision from the ground up.

⁷¹ I take up this point again in 5.2. See also 3.7 and Box 15 about using derived data.

⁷² Found in DOCX and PDF formats in my dataset, while the ‘Revised tag’ column of the DATA sheet of the XLSX file reflects an intermediate revision.

3.7 *Rendering the data for quantitative analysis*

The textual analysis method introduced here is geared foremost toward the quantitative study and comparison of subsets of the data, with the frequency of specific kinds of attribution serving as the basis of quantification. In order to make this possible, all data—including the qualitative data generated in CATMA as well as the metadata generated and imported into CATMA earlier—were exported in tabulated form. After a series of complex spreadsheet transformations, the dumped data were arranged so that they consisted of exactly one record (spreadsheet row) for each analytical tag created in CATMA, with each of these records containing columns not only for the details recorded in CATMA for that particular tag, but also for the metadata pertaining to the description enclosing that tag and to the text enclosing that description.⁷³ As an illustration, the boxes in this section present the contents of a single record of the aggregated data table, split up into chunks and transposed into a column for readability.

In Box 12, which shows the analytical data, the annotation ID is a unique identifier automatically generated by CATMA, which is not relevant to the analysis, but which played a vital role during the manipulation of the data into this final form. The designation of the tag itself includes, as discussed in 2.3, the label for the dimension to which the tag belongs, as well as the intermediate category or categories if applicable. The actual segment of text tagged with the code is included as well as a snippet (generated in CATMA by mechanically trimming a number of words before and after the tagged segment) to provide some rudimentary context. The starting and ending point of the tag, indexed by character number in the text, have not played a role in any analysis I have conducted, but they were essential for the manipulation of data involved in adding metadata to the tag data, and they might conceivably play a role in an analysis involving the collocation or proximity of tags (see 4.5). If the tag has a property, the value of that property is also shown here.⁷⁴

⁷³ This data table (VengiCalukyaUnderlingsCATA.xlsx) has been published electronically (Balogh 2023b). The procedure by which the data were rendered into this form will be discussed in a separate publication (Balogh in preparation).

⁷⁴ As noted in 2.3, a code never has more than one property in my schema, so there is no need for the name of the property to appear in the data record; essentially, whatever property a code possesses carries potentially interesting information supplementing the concept tagged with that code.

Annotation ID	CATMA_6AE35669-A195-4C62-8F1F-A07BE05CFC1F
CATMA tag	/EMI:superhuman
segment	pārttha-tulya
context	kṛta-jñāś ca/ ***pārttha-tulya***-parākkramaḥ/ / (4
start	745
end	760
property	arjuna

Box 12. Analytical tag data for quantitative analysis

Box 13 shows the text metadata in the form in which they appear in the final dataset. Metadata represented in the XML files by non-mandatory attributes have been filled, when absent from a record, with their default values in the course of the preparation of the data table. Thus, when for instance issuer certainty was not explicitly noted as ‘medium’ or ‘low,’ it now has a value of ‘high.’ The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the fields for sect, incompleteness and remark.

textID	VCal00001
title	Sātārā plates of Viṣṇuvardhana I
corpus	Vcal
issuer	01_VV1
issuerCert	high
date	622
dateMargin	5
sect	Brahmanical
incomplete	no
remark	0

Box 13. Text metadata for quantitative analysis

Box 14 illustrates the final form of the description metadata. Here too, the default values have been supplied for the optional attributes of orbit certainty, ID certainty, gender and remark, and religion has been filled with ‘NA’ for foci other than ritualists.

focus	sovereign
orbit	self
orbitCert	high
ID	01_VV1
IDCert	high
gender	male
religion	NA
remark	0

Box 14. Description metadata for quantitative analysis

Finally, depending on analytical interest, derived data columns may be created at this stage by further reducing (abstracting) one of the existing data, either through mathematical and text-manipulation functions in spreadsheet software, or with the aid of lookup tables in which one column lists all the values of an item of primary data, and one or more additional columns list the corresponding value of one or more items of derived data. The left-hand side of Box 15 shows a few such data by way of illustration. Among these, ‘century’ has been created algorithmically from the date field in the text metadata.⁷⁵ ‘Orbit group’ is a classification of the specific orbit labels into generic classes such as patrilineal kin, matrilineal kin, spouse and spiritual relations. This has been created using a lookup table in which one column listed all the possible orbits, and the second column listed the group token corresponding to each particular orbit. Part of such a table is illustrated in the right-hand side of Box 15.⁷⁶ The entry ‘lvl1 dim’ is simply the full name of the top-level dimension to which the tag belongs. This is derived by extracting the three-letter dimension label from the name of the code, and using a lookup table to match that label to the proper name of the dimension. The name of the intermediate category to which a code belongs can be derived similarly. Moreover, the same method can be used for creating a different hierarchisation of the codes in a non-destructive way (5.2).

⁷⁵ The number in the date field is divided by 100 and rounded upward to the nearest integer, then the string ‘th’ is suffixed to the result. (None of the dates in my corpus require a different ordinal suffix, but where necessary, they could be handled with a slightly more complex algorithm.)

⁷⁶ The full table may be found in the ‘META’ sheet of my dataset (Balogh 2023b).

century	7th	←	orbit	orbit group
orbit group	Patriline		self	Self
lvl1 dim	Eminence		grandfather	Patriline
			father	Patriline
			ancestor	Patriline
			mother	Matriline
			husband	Spouse
			...	...

Box 15. Derived data for quantitative analysis

4. Applications

4.1 Qualitative exploration

The qualitative phase of my investigation was directed primarily towards the development of an ‘instrument’ for use in quantitative analysis. But this coding frame is itself a qualitative finding inasmuch as it is a catalogue of the concepts employed in the textual corpus for representing its protagonists, and a considered attempt at organising these concepts into a hierarchy of increasingly broad themes. It is possible to establish a similar list of concepts and hierarchy of themes by classical hermeneutic methods, but the application of codes to the text and the formalisation of the hermeneutic circle in the cyclical revision of codes and hierarchies adds rigour and transparency to the process, and affords a not altogether unjustified sense of confidence that the findings are rooted more extensively in the sources than in the analyst’s frame of mind.

It is not without a hint of derision that Krippendorff (2004, 340) refers to analyses of this sort as ‘fishing expeditions.’ While he appears to equate these with ‘interpretive or qualitative’ analysis (*ibid.*, 341) on the whole, what he really objects to is probably the kind of analysis whose sole objective is to explore texts without any preformulated research questions. His preferred approach, which he calls problem-driven as opposed to text-driven, is to first formulate a research question rigorously and only then to start everything else including locating the texts appropriate to the purpose. The method outlined here, then, is to a large extent text-driven, since the inscrip-

tions are the sources around which everything has been planned. Yet the research interest, if not the specific questions, have been defined in advance and the details of the analysis have all been constructed with that particular interest in mind. If it is a fishing expedition, then at least we know it is not a hunting, mushroom-gathering or birdwatching trek to the same woods.

I have not explicitly pursued the qualitative route beyond establishing a category system for quantitative analysis, but some of the insights gained in the process may well be explored further. The essential moral of the story, for me, is that I am predisposed to look in the text for 'what X did,' or at least 'what X is asserted to have done,' but what is in fact more telling is 'how an image of X is projected.' The 'historical fact' that King A defeated Enemy E in a battle is of secondary relevance in this sort of study. The important question is how this (alleged) victory is put to the service of representation. Does it aim at depicting King A in terms of Belligerence: crushing his enemy's army, beheading its leader, burning his city and violating his womenfolk? In terms of Prowess: so much stronger and better armed and more tactically gifted that his victory was inevitable? Of Dominance: forcing E to prostrate himself and annexing his territory? Of Prestige: reaping reputation on the battlefield and returning covered in glory and laden with appropriated insignia? Or in terms of Morality: eradicating the blemish on the surface of the earth that was E, like light dispelling darkness?

As an example of distinguishing the representational aspects of actions which on the face of it are similar: what seem on first reading to be acts of giving, and had been classified in my preliminary scheme as aspects of morality on account of their benevolent nature, now seem to be different facets of something more complex. I had decided at an early stage that Beneficence itself should be regarded as a dimension independent from Morality, with the latter limited to an (intrinsic or socially imposed) ethical imperative. Thus, selflessness is a factor of Morality semantically related to giving, while giving itself is a beneficent, rather than moral, characteristic. Upon further consideration, acts of giving were subdivided into three codes. Charity (defined as helping those who seek or need support) and patronage (giving to those who are deemed worthy in the sociocultural milieu) are frequently mentioned together, and in my opinion both serve primarily to establish an image of Beneficence.⁷⁷ That is to say, when a protagonist is introduced as

⁷⁷ I am not sure whether the images projected by the texts make a crucial distinction between charity and patronage. I suspect that the former is seen rather as royal, or at least *kṣatriya* behaviour, while the latter is desirable in all people of means, regardless of *varṇa* or occupation. But because they are often featured together, they may just be

selfless, then the emphasis is on that person's ethical bent, while being described as donating freely to the blind or to poets puts the act of helping foremost. Moreover, liberality or 'generosity in the abstract' (without mentioning recipients or conditions) in my present interpretation refers foremost to prestation as a status symbol. This concept was therefore detached from other kinds of giving, and its code has been assigned to the category of opulence (encompassing displays of wealth and hospitality), which in turn contributes to the dimension of Prestige.

Another notion developed in the process is that many traits may be thought of in terms of a division between potential and actual action, although I am not convinced that this distinction is fruitful in all details of representation. Still, it is along this watershed that my preliminary dimension of Martiality was split into Prowess and Belligerence upon consideration that traits of martial potential were often attributed in different contexts than acts of actual aggression. A similar distinction may underlie the above distinction of Morality and Beneficence. In a more complex interaction, my present dimension of Dominance reflects actual action, while potential dominance is most expressly present in Entitlement, but is also implied by several other dimensions such as Eminence, Prowess and Competence.

One concrete technique for in-depth qualitative exploration is a Key Word In Context analysis, abbreviated KWIC. A simple form of this technique is the classic concordance list, where occurrences of a word (or other string of characters) are retrieved and listed with a chunk of context. This quick-and-dirty method has seen much use in computer aided content analysis (Krippendorff 2004, 262), but once codes have been applied to the texts, similar lists can be created for the occurrences of any code, regardless of the actual word or phrase in which the corresponding concept is embodied. Doing so is particularly useful in the refinement of the coding frame (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012, 108), and I have made good use of it in the qualitative phase of my work (3.6), but I have not explicitly pursued analysis of this nature. As an illustration of how KWIC lists may be used in continuing qualitative exploration of the themes in coded texts, I present in Box 16 below the occurrences of the concept of safety from natural threats (/BEN:safety) in the land controlled by a protagonist. It should be noted, however, that the preparation of my data was not undertaken with the ob-

different ways of expressing what is ultimately the same notion, parallel to the way giving to the blind, the destitute, the orphaned and the ailing (often listed separately) are all different ways of expressing the concept of charity.

jective of KWIC analysis,⁷⁸ and the text clippings created mechanistically by CATMA are not always sufficient for grasping the context of occurrences.⁷⁹

No.	context before	tagged segment	context after
1	satata-payo-dhenur abhīr	nnirītir aparug	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
2	satata-payo-dhenur abhīr	nnirītir aparuj	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
3	satata-payo-dhenur abhīr	nnirītir aparug	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
4	satata-payo-dhenur abhīr	nnirītir aparug	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
5	satata-payo-dhenur abhīr	nnirītir aparun	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
6	bhavati dharmmānurakto	nirītir aparuj	nirasta-coro deśaḥ
7	-bhīravas su-caritā jātā	nirītir mmahī	deśāc ca trividhāsura
8	vṛṣṭir janecchānugā	rogā nāśa-gatā	dvijaiś ca su-kṛtā yāgā
9	jagat sarvvaṁ	nirītitām	durjjanā vilayaṁ sarvve
10	dūrikṛtāvagraha-cora	-rogāḥ	prajā labhante saphalaṁ trivarggaṁ
11	jātā nirītir mmahī deśāc ca	trividhāsura āśu niragād	vṛṣṭir janecchānugā

Box 16. Attributions of safety in context

It is immediately obvious that the great majority of attributions of safety occur in a stock verse, employed in five grants,⁸⁰ all issued by Amma II (r. 945–970 CE):

While this king rules, the land is replete with the bounty of many a ripe harvest, exempt from fear, **free from disasters, devoid of pestilence** and rid of bandits, and its cows always give milk.⁸¹

The paired notions ‘absence of disasters’ and ‘freedom from disease’ also appear in a grant of Amma II’s rival Bādapa⁸² (r. 945) in a stanza almost

⁷⁸ See also 4.5.

⁷⁹ It is of course always possible to look up the original. The context shown in the box has been subjected to some cosmetic editing and in a few instances I have supplied a bit more of the context than was present in the data output from CATMA. One example of the raw output is shown in Box 12 above.

⁸⁰ Nos. 1 to 5: VengiCalukya00042, 00043, 00045, 00046 and 00074 respectively.

⁸¹ With negligible variation in the five texts: *yasmin śāsati nṛpatau paripakvānekasasya-saṁpac-chālī | satata-payo-dhenur abhīr nnirītir aparun nirasta-coro-deśaḥ ||*

⁸² No. 6: VengiCalukya00030.

identical to the above and in one of Bhīma I⁸³ (r. 892–921 CE). Absence of disasters is mentioned without freedom from disease in another charter of Bhīma I,⁸⁴ while the latter appears without the former in a charter of the late ruler Rājārāja I Narendra⁸⁵ (eleventh century CE). Finally, the former of Bhīma I's above grants features yet another cue to safety,⁸⁶ in the same stanza as the other two, but expressed in more general terms as the departure of 'the three kinds of grief'.⁸⁷

Notably, every single attribution of safety is to the reigning sovereign.⁸⁸ Each of these references appear in verse and, as found above, indicators of safety tend to come in twos or threes. Looking at their context shows that they also co-occur with the related concepts of prosperity (e.g. plentiful harvests, bountiful cows, timely rains) and security (e.g. freedom from thieves, bandits and strife). This utopia is, according to the texts' rhetoric, a consequence simply of the fact that the king rules the land,⁸⁹ brought about through a magical aura as it were, rather than by any particular action of the king.

The conceptual distinction between safety and security seems to be quite weak, so coding the two as distinct may not be warranted. Security is, nonetheless, rather different in my perception, since the unspoken threat of the king's punitive power (*daṇḍa*) is inherent in it. Indeed, security appears in the corpus not only in the proximity of safety, but also in contexts whose theme may be identified as the king's perfect fulfilment of his royal duties.⁹⁰

⁸³ Nos. 7 and 8, VengiCalukya00075. The two notions are in a single stanza, but are not adjacent, so they have been coded separately. With hindsight, these concepts ought to have been likewise coded separately in the texts where they are adjacent.

⁸⁴ No. 9: VengiCalukya00025.

⁸⁵ No. 10: VengiCalukya00078.

⁸⁶ No. 11: VengiCalukya00075.

⁸⁷ The locus (VengiCalukya00075 v. 13) is slightly problematic, the received text being *deśācvatrividhāsūniragād*. I emend slightly (*deśāc ca trividhāsū āsū niragād*) and interpret *asu* as a synonym of *duḥkha*, so that *trividhāsu* refers to *duḥkha-traya*.

⁸⁸ Moreover, such attributions are linked only to a very small number of kings in the Veṅgī Cālukya corpus, but they do occur repeatedly in connection with Bhīma I and Amma II. It may not be coincidental that both of these kings' reign began in contention with collateral rivals backed by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, which presumably wrought havoc throughout the realm.

⁸⁹ VengiCalukya00025 goes so far as to claim that this has come about thanks to the mere birth of Bhīma I (v. 22, *yaj-janmamātrenaiva*).

⁹⁰ An epitomic list from VengiCalukya00037, v. 9: *bhītān āśvāsayan sac-charaṇam upagatān pālayan kaṇṭhakān utsannān kurvvan su-grhṇan karam apara-bhuvo rañjayan svam janaugham | tanvan kīrttiṁ narendrocayam avanamayann āñjayan vastu-rāṣiṇ,*

Also, the concept is sometimes used to characterise a predecessor or a subordinate of the reigning king, while safety always applies only to the latter. Security does not, however, co-occur with martial aspects, except possibly in the single case in my corpus where security is attributed to a subordinate ruler rather than a member of the Cālukya dynasty.⁹¹

4.2 *Demographics*

At a very basic level, tagged attributions can be easily tallied for various combinations of text metadata and description metadata. For example, the total number of attributions made in the Eastern Cālukya copperplate corpus is 5779, of which 4432 (77%) pertain to sovereigns, 916 to dignitaries, 364 to ritualists and 67 to commoners. Looking at these numbers in a breakdown by orbit types, we find (Table 1) that descriptions of patrilineal ancestors actually take up slightly more attributions than do ‘self’ descriptions in the focus class of sovereigns (the proportion of the former to the latter is 103%). The patriline is also very prominent in the representation of dignitaries (66%), but much less so among ritualists (44%) and even less among commoners (21%). Lineages as a whole are featured strongly for sovereigns (the proportion of lineage assertions to self assertions is 58%), but far less so for dignitaries (4%) and hardly at all for other classes (below 2% for both ritualists and commoners). Matrilineal predecessors are never described in connection to ritualists, though they do appear occasionally in all the other groups, most prominently in that of dignitaries (10%). Spiritual ancestors (teacher—disciple chains) are, on the other hand, only described for ritualists. Finally, spouses of dignitaries are quite frequently described (8%), but those of sovereigns hardly ever (under 0.5%), and those of others, never. Most of these findings are not surprising, but they corroborate intuition with hard numbers and some of them, such as the level of attention dedicated to the matrilineal ancestors and spouses of dignitaries, may be worth following up.

‘Comforting the fearful, protecting those seeking his gallant protection, demolishing disruptions, honourably extracting tribute from other countries, earning the affection of the hosts of his own subjects, propagating his reputation, overcoming a multitude of kings, obtaining a hoard of wealth ...’

⁹¹ VengiCalukya00030 v. 6. The locus is damaged; it certainly describes the underlord as heroic (*vīkhyāta-sauryākaraḥ*), but I am not entirely confident in my interpretation of the immediately subsequent part of the stanza as an attribution of security. The stanza ends, and the following stanza continues, with further attributions in the theme of valour.

As another example of the demographic statistics that can be obtained from the data, we may put to the test the impression that *praśasti* grows longer as we progress in time. More accurately: although it is clear that the copperplate inscriptions tend to become longer with time, is it therefore correct to assume that later eulogies of the Veṅgī Cālukyas say more about the people they describe, or do they just flourish more verbiage to make a similar number of attributions? The figures in Table 2 show the number of attributions pertaining to sovereign foci, counted in the corpus after the elimination of incomplete charters. The numbers have been tallied for each century and then divided down by the number of charters issued in the respective century, so that the figures under ‘count.’ signify the average number of attributions per charter, while the columns headed ‘incr.’ indicate the increment in each century expressed as a percentage of the total for the previous century. In the row for totals, ‘count.’ gives the total number of attributions divided by the number of texts,⁹² while ‘incr.’ gives the increment from the earliest figure (seventh century) to the latest (eleventh century).

	Sovereign	Dignitary	Ritualist	Commoner
Self	1681	488	218	53
Patriline	1729	322	95	11
Lineage	972	19	3	1
Matriline	43	50	—	2
Spiritual	—	—	48	—
Spouse	7	37	—	—
Total	4432	916	364	67

Table 1. Number of attributions by focus and orbit class

⁹² This is not the unweighted mean of the counts for the centuries above, as the number of texts extant from each century is different.

	Lineage		Patriline		Self		All	
	count	incr.	count	incr.	count	incr.	count	incr.
7th	8.70	NA	13.70	NA	14.25	NA	36.65	NA
8th	12.88	48%	13.00	-5%	17.19	21%	43.06	17%
9th	13.55	5%	17.91	38%	19.18	12%	51.55	20%
10th	13.00	-4%	24.53	37%	23.57	23%	62.13	21%
11th	13.25	2%	78.50	220%	50.75	115%	144.75	133%
Total	12.00	52%	21.35	473%	20.75	256%	54.72	295%

Table 2. Number of attributions per text by century and orbit class

As Figure 3 (plotting the same numbers as a line chart) eloquently shows, the total number of assertions with the sovereign as their focus increases at a steady but moderate pace from the seventh to the tenth century, then sky-rockets off the chart by the eleventh.

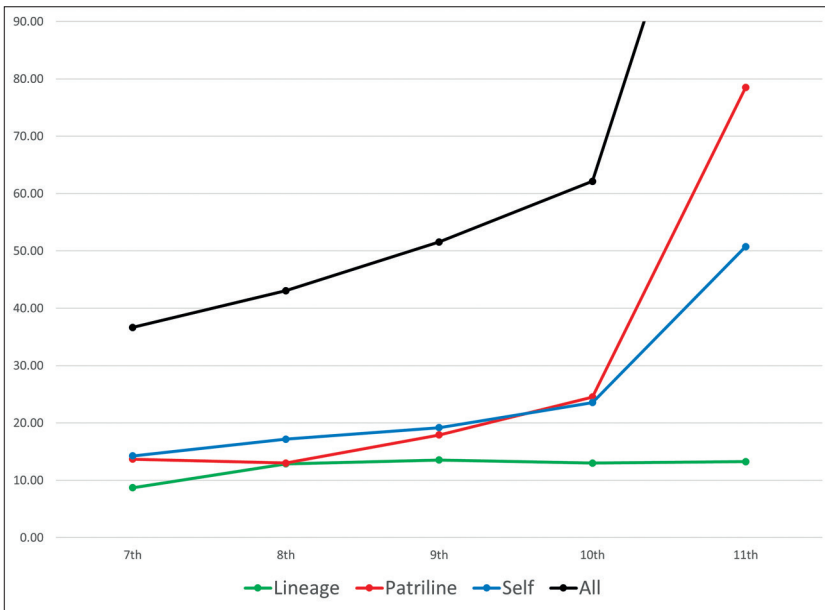


Figure 3. Number of attributions per text by century and orbit class

The net increase of almost 300% is, however, not evenly distributed across the orbits: by far the greatest growth is found in the description of patrilineal ancestors, while the description of the lineage grows only from the seventh

century to the eighth, but then fluctuates at much the same level. The variation in the amount of characterisation dedicated to the lineage as a whole and to patrilineal ancestors is probably due to global changes in the standard copperplate charter format employed by these rulers. The mature description of the Cālukya dynasty first appears in grants of Maṅgi Yuvarāja (r. ca. 682–706), after which it persists with minor variations, but before which it tends to be much briefer. The early Veṅgī Cālukyas typically introduced the last three predecessors of the reigning king in their charters, but during the time of Vijayāditya III (r. ca. 849–892), they switched to a full king list from the founding of the line to the present day. Although only a few of the listed kings are characterised at any length, this practice probably accounts for part of the later prominence of the patriline, while its mushrooming in the eleventh century seems to be due to the introduction of the Purāṇic origin story of the dynasty under Vimalāditya (r. ca. 1011–1018), in which several mythical ancestors are described in more or less detail.

4.3 Representation in absolute numbers

The next level of complexity is reached by going beyond the mere presence of attributions to consider the traits attributed to the protagonists. As an example, Figure 4 shows the number of attributions found in the corpus, broken down by dimension and plotted in order of decreasing prevalence. This is a representational profile, showing us the degree to which different dimensions contribute to the image projected in the texts about their protagonists. Attributions of Prestige are by far the most prominent, occurring well over 1200 times or more than twice as often as the next commonest kind of attribution. Eminence, Entitlement, Belligerence, Morality and Dominance are all widely attributed, each occurring 525 to 628 times. Prowess, Beneficence, Competence and Intellect occupy a lower step, with 319 to 356 occurrences each. Appeal and Submission are mentioned least often, 148 and 112 times respectively.

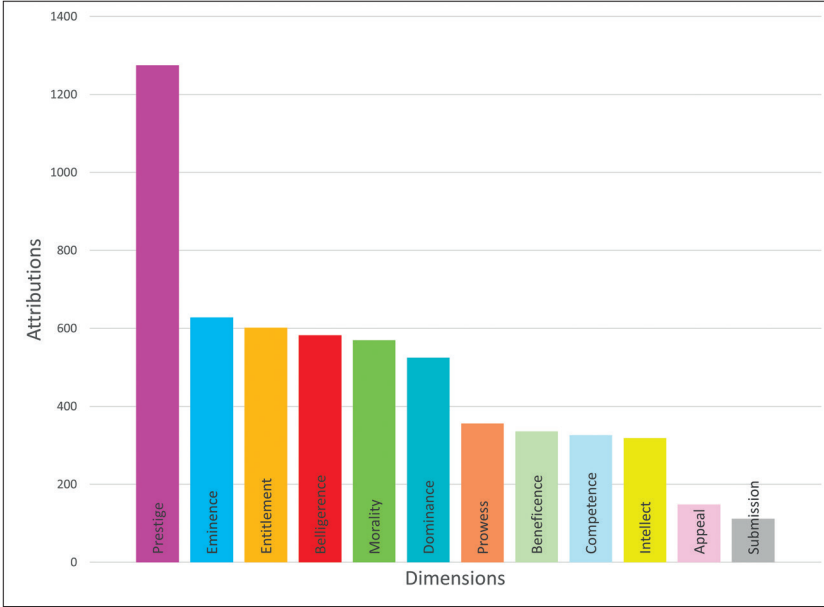


Figure 4. Number of attributions per dimension

Similar bar charts can be created for the frequencies of codes at lower levels of the hierarchy. As an illustration of the lowest level, Figure 5 presents the most common specific codes (those that occur at least a hundred times in the corpus), ranked in a decreasing order of prevalence. Comparing this chart with Figure 4 shows that the great prevalence of Prestige among the dimensions is due to the fact that no fewer than five codes contributing to this dimension are present among the 15 most frequent. The foremost contributor is by a wide margin the generic indication of majesty (/PRE:majesty), which usually takes the form of the honorific *śrī*. Royal titles are also widely used, and the only reason they are lower in rank is that they are denoted by several codes, distinguishing superior and supreme royal titles.⁹³

⁹³ Superior titles (/PRE:titleRoyal:superior) include *mahārāja* and *rājādhirāja*; supreme titles (/PRE:titleRoyal:supreme) include *mahārājādhirāja* and *parama-bhaṭṭāraka*. The two together come close to the prevalence of majesty, and the intermediate category including these two and other royal titles (such as *yuvārāja*, *parama-brahmaṇya* and *parama-māheśvara*) in fact supersedes all other codes in frequency.

However, the most common specific code is not a factor of Prestige but one of Eminence, namely the attribution of a superhuman stature.⁹⁴ The third most prevalent dimension was found above to be Entitlement, and indeed, two codes assigned to this dimension are among the five most common. Divine sanction (/ENT:sanction:divine) means the approval of a deity,⁹⁵ while ancestral sanction (/ENT:sanction:ancestral) refers to claims of ancestry adduced in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of kingship.⁹⁶ The rest of the most commonly occurring concepts contribute to Belligerence, Prowess, Dominance and Morality, which are also the four most prevalent dimensions as found above.

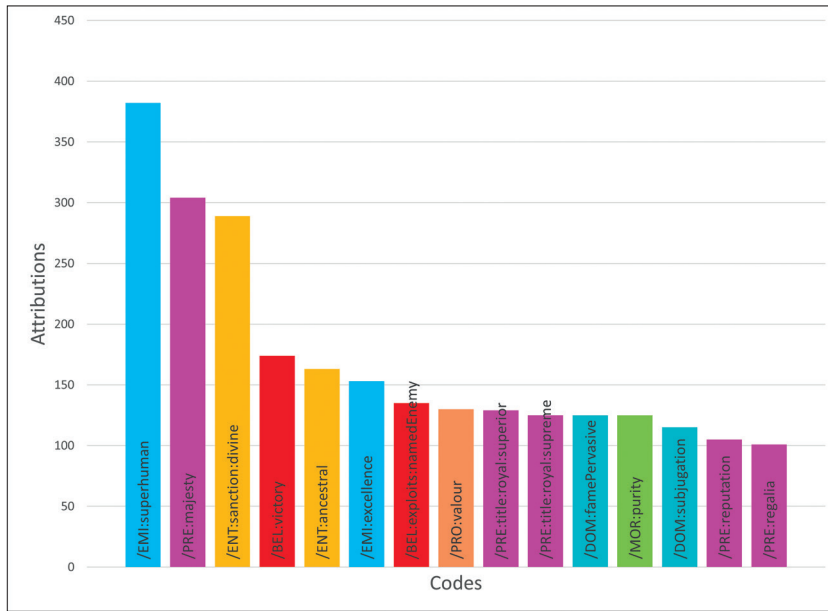


Figure 5. Number of attributions per specific code

⁹⁴ This consists in comparisons to divine beings and mythical heroes.

⁹⁵ E.g. *mātr̥-gaṇa-paripālita* and *svāmi-mahāsena-pādānudhyāta*.

⁹⁶ E.g. *mānavya-sagotra* and *hārītī-putra*.

4.4 *Comparison of representational profiles*

Most of the attributions in the dataset concern sovereigns (Table 1), so their characterisation by and large determines the profile of the aggregated data examined in 4.3. It can be expected, however, that different foci will be characterised in different ways in the texts, and factors other than the type of focus are also likely to bear on the composition of representation. For example, the great frequency of divine and ancestral sanction observed in Figure 5 is probably due to the fact that several instances of both occur in almost every description of the Cālukya *vaṁśa* (the lineage orbit, rather than the self orbit, of sovereign foci), so different orbits are likely to have differing profiles.

Slicing the mass of analytical data on the basis of selected metadata, the representation of such heterogeneous subgroups can be studied separately. However, bar charts such as those above are best suited for examining how these items rank by prevalence within a given sample. Creating separate charts for groups of interest and comparing them mentally is certainly feasible, but superimposed charts would be more immediately comprehensible, especially if more than one group were involved. Converting the figures to relative prevalence (2.8) and arranging the dimensions in a fixed order makes this possible, but a bar chart is not ideal for such presentation. A line graph would serve the purpose better, but I find that the ideal form of visualisation for profile comparison is a spider chart,⁹⁷ such as that in Figure 6, which depicts the same data as those in Figure 4 above.⁹⁸ Such a diagram plots the values of several variables on axes radiating from the centre like the spokes of a wheel. When the relative prevalence of analytical dimensions (or other items of the hierarchy) is plotted in this form, the mark on any particular spoke represents the relative prevalence of that particular variable in the sample. The profile of the sample is clearly discernible in the form of an irregular polygon where dimensions more prevalent in the profile stick further out from the centre.

⁹⁷ Also known as a radar chart or cobweb chart, and by a number of other names.

⁹⁸ The prevalence figures have been converted to percentages here, although this is not essential when there are no further superimposed profiles. The shape of the profile would be exactly the same if the absolute frequencies had been retained.

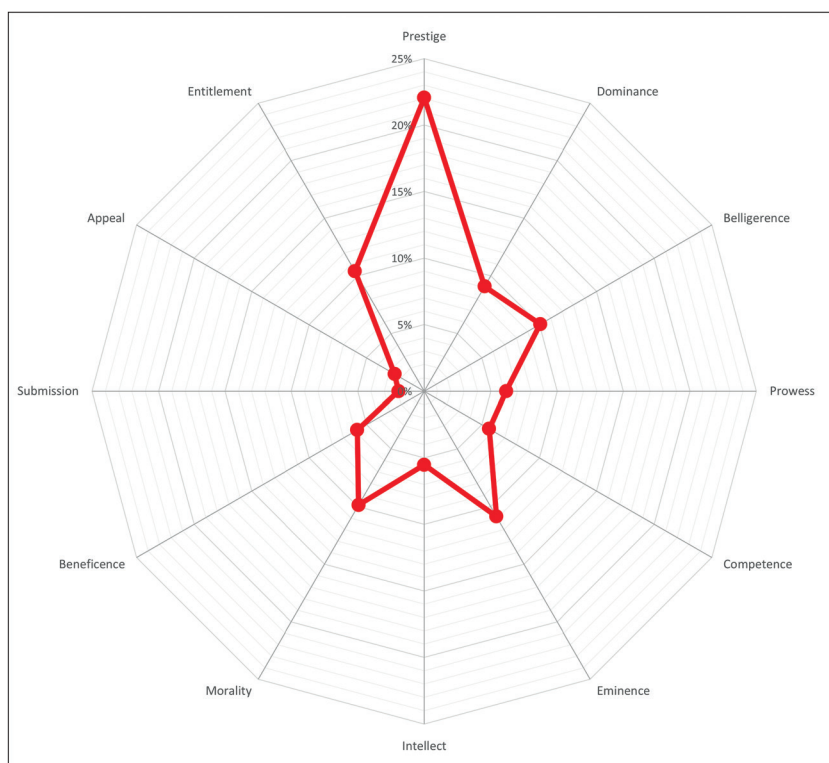


Figure 6. Number of attributions per dimension, plotted as a spider chart

Just as seen in Figure 4 above, the dimension of Prestige is extremely prominent, Eminence, Entitlement, Belligerence, Morality and Dominance are less emphatic but still strong, while Appeal and Submission are barely present. The order in which the dimensions are shown in the chart is altogether arbitrary, since each dimension is in principle independent. For my spider charts, I have arranged the dimensions in a way that tends to put conceptually similar dimensions near one another, because I find that the graphs are easier to comprehend this way than, for instance, with the dimensions in alphabetical order clockwise from top.⁹⁹ However, the very different shapes plotted in the latter chart would carry exactly the same information

⁹⁹ Presenting dimensions in a decreasing rank of prevalence, as in the previous section, would not be feasible with superimposed profiles, since the ranking is likely to differ from profile to profile. The dimensions and codes are, however, listed in my dataset in alphabetic order to facilitate looking them up.

as those presented here. Furthermore, although spider charts resemble a rolled-up line chart in appearance, the adjacent radii (spokes) represent discrete variables rather than different measurement instances of a single variable. The line connecting the values plotted on each axis is thus not in itself meaningful and only serves as a prop for visualisation.

The comparison of profiles obtained from the textual analysis of representation is at the core of two studies I have completed. One of these juxtaposes the comprehensive representational profiles of underlings to that of sovereigns (Balogh 2024), while the other examines whether and how some specific dimensions in the representation of sovereigns differ depending on the sectarian orientation of the charter containing their eulogy (Balogh in press 2025). Therefore, in spite of having found profile comparison to be the most fruitful manner in which my analytical technique can be employed, in the present study I illustrate comparisons in no greater detail than other applications.

Figure 7 shows the representational profiles of all women and men in the corpus. We are thus looking at descriptions where the target is a person (and not a community, 2.5), partitioned according to the gender of the target, and without regard to other metadata such as the type of focus or the orbit occupied by the target. Most of the women are in satellite orbits to male protagonists, but the texts do feature a very small number of female protagonists and their female satellites. The male profile bears strong resemblance to the aggregated profile in Figure 6, since men make up the majority of targets in the corpus as a whole. The only major difference between the collective profile and the male one is the almost complete absence of Entitlement from the latter, the reason for which is that Entitlement is associated almost exclusively with the royal dynasty, which is genderless. The female profile is, however, strikingly different. For one thing, while all dimensions except Entitlement and Submission are present to a noticeable degree in the male profile, the female one has eight dimensions with a prevalence under 4%, five of which are completely absent. Most attributions to women are thus divided among only four dimensions, of which Eminence is the most emphatic (37%), Morality (26%) and Appeal (21%) have a strong presence, and Prestige (11%) is the least notable.

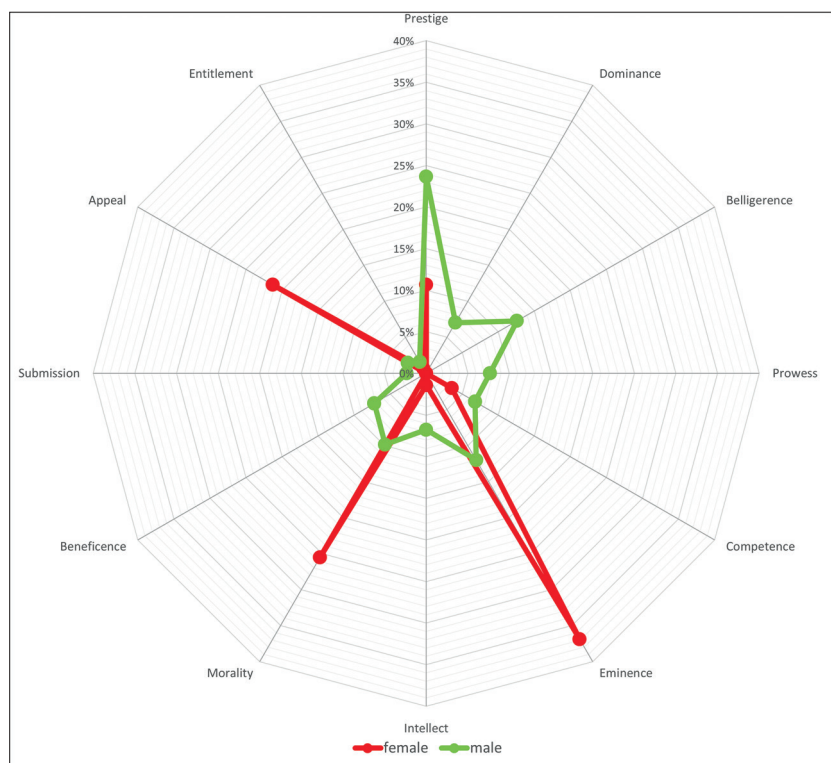


Figure 7. Profiles of female and male targets

As an example of profiling at a lower level of the coding hierarchy, Figure 8 has the factors contributing to the dimension of Intellect as its radii. The two profiles plotted here are those of sovereign and dignitary foci, each limited to self orbits. In other words, the descriptions of predecessors and other satellites are ignored here, and the profiles are based solely on how the texts present sovereigns and dignitaries themselves. The intellectual profile of sovereigns is less versatile, with more than half of it (58%) being made up of attributions of education. This is also the most prominent factor in the profile of dignitaries (at 39%), but is more balanced by other factors there. Education is in fact itself an intermediate category comprised of numerous codes representing diverse fields of education.¹⁰⁰ Looking deeper into the details (not illustrated here), we find that the education of sovereigns is com-

¹⁰⁰ The other six factors in the chart are individual codes.

prised mostly of the royal sciences (*rāja-vidyā*, etc.); it also includes practical arts (*kalā*), unspecified science (*śāstra*, *sūtra*, etc.) and, occasionally, law (*dharma-śāstra*). Dignitaries are represented with a broader range of qualifications, among which Vedic studies (*veda*, *śruti*) stand out (since many of the dignitaries are Brahmin ministers), but which also include the practical arts, statesmanship (*artha-śāstra*, *nīti-śāstra*), unspecified science and generic education (*vidyā*, *śikṣā*; being *pañḍita*, etc.) and sometimes other fields such as grammatics and *smṛti*.

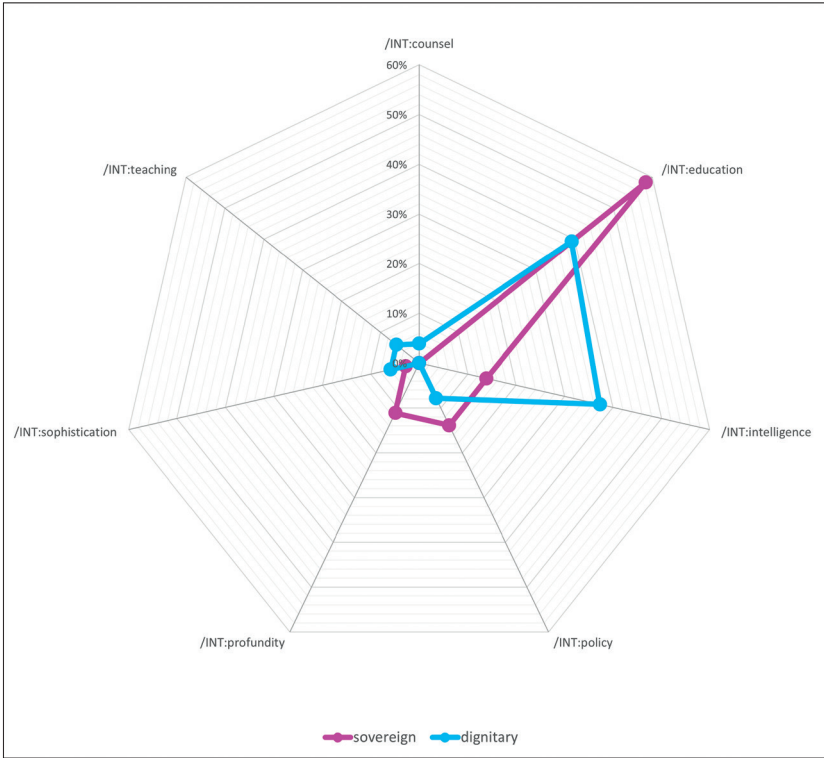


Figure 8. Categories of Intellect in sovereigns and dignitaries

Returning to the profile in the figure, we find that sovereigns are also quite prominently represented as possessing good policy (*naya*, *nīti*¹⁰¹) and as being profound (*agādha*, etc.) in general, while in dignitaries, intelligence (*buddhi*, *prajñā*; being *budha* or *paṭu*, etc.) is almost as prevalent as educa-

¹⁰¹ But not *nīti-śāstra* which, as noted above, has been coded as a branch of education.

tion. Qualities which are rarely asserted for dignitaries, but are still more prominent in their characterisation than in that of sovereigns, include the provision of counsel, sophistication and teaching activity.

4.5 Quantitative analysis of co-occurrence

As noted in 4.1, studying specific co-occurrences of tags may be an informative addition to the study of representational profiles. KWIC lists generated in CATMA, as well as the context clippings in my exported dataset, can be used easily to look at the context of any code. However, the context segments are delimited by a certain number of words, but—depending on how we define a word in a Sanskrit text replete with long compounds—this can yield widely varying results.¹⁰² Moreover, the clippings can only be displayed as plain text, without any indication of other tags present in the context. CATMA's rather sophisticated query language does allow the user to search for collocations of two (or more) specific tags within a range of a specified number of words. Using this function is, however, rather tedious, since the results are shown in the same manner, with just a small number of words on either side of the first specified code. To find the actual collocated tags in context, one must click through from the results list to the annotated text. This is feasible for a small number of individual combinations that one intends to track down and analyse in depth, but not useful for a broader study of collocation patterns.

It may be possible to tweak my method for analysing code co-occurrence on a more massive scale by introducing a unique identifier for descriptions. Once discrete descriptions can be singled out from the mass of data as units of analysis, it should be possible to analyse patterns of co-occurrence quantitatively and find out, for instance, which codes most frequently occur together with any particular code, and which never or most rarely occur together with it.

A unique description identifier may be encoded in the texts as a metadata item in the preparatory stage, but one that does the job reasonably well could also be derived from the existing metadata. Creating a new item from a com-

¹⁰² Also, what CATMA counts as a word while making the context clippings is not clear to me and seems to differ from the definition of 'word' employed in CATMA's query language. After testing and/or communication with the developers, the initial input texts could be prepared in such a way that the context clippings are larger and of a more consistent size if this is desirable.

bination of the text identifier and the target identifier would provide a unique identifier for each description of most entities in the corpus.¹⁰³ Moreover, this method of deriving description identifiers opens up the way to alternative definitions of what counts as one description: descriptions could also be unitised by a combination of the text ID and the focus, so that the description of any particular person includes the descriptions of his satellites.¹⁰⁴

An analysis based on descriptions as units—regardless of whether their IDs are recorded manually or derived from existing metadata—would disregard proximity and seriality, being aware only of whether a code is present within the scope of a description or not. Hence, co-occurrence is a more appropriate term than collocation for the kind of phenomenon made accessible through it. To study proximity specifically, the index numbers in the data table, which record the character count at which each tag begins and ends, may be exploited in combination with unique description identifiers. However, character counts as a measure of proximity are no less problematic than word counts.

Unitising descriptions on the basis of existing metadata would also ignore whether or not the actual descriptive passages in the texts are contiguous. Sometimes, descriptions are imbricated (see 3.4 and Box 10), and some protagonists—chiefly the sovereign—may be described in discrete passages, for instance once in the opening *praśasti* and once more in the executive section of the charter. Ignoring the former kind of discontinuity is an advantage, but discrete descriptive passages in diplomatically distinct parts of a text may represent the same protagonist in different ways. To study this latter kind of distinction, the manual creation of description identifiers would be indispensable.

4.6 Statistical tools

Having a large, quantitative dataset at hand is an invitation to apply mathematical statistics to it. Exploratory techniques such as principal component

¹⁰³ Except for ritualist foci and for collective entities, who do not have an ID in my present setup, and for mythical ancestors who all have the same ID. This could, however, be remedied with less labour than the manual addition of description IDs would require.

¹⁰⁴ The problem here is that some texts include more than one representative of a focus class, for instance two dignitary foci. Their descriptions could not be distinguished by this method, but an additional variable like ‘dependency’ (5.7) might eliminate this failing.

analysis may help in improving the allocation of codes to higher hierarchical classes. Multidimensional scaling may be useful in comparing the complete representational profiles of specific groups. Inferential statistics such as (single or multiple-factor) analysis of variance may confirm or disconfirm apparent differences between groups.¹⁰⁵ The key difficulty is that the correct method must be chosen on the basis of careful consideration. Even if non-parametric methods are employed, samples and cases must be defined rigorously and the selected method must possess the appropriate kind of robustness. The primary reason that I have resisted the temptation so far is that my own acquaintance with statistics is too superficial to do this with any confidence. Without a sound theoretical foundation, the application of statistical calculations to the data would remain akin to magic. Nonetheless, especially if similar but larger datasets are built up in the future, the statistical avenue is definitely worth exploring. Conversely, it may be advantageous to consider potential statistical analyses before embarking on the creation of larger datasets, to ensure that metadata are coded in a way that statistical methods can then take advantage of.

5. Concluding discussion

5.1 Taking stock

As a fundamental positive conclusion, it has been established that the methodology of textual analysis can be applied fruitfully to the study of representation in Indic inscriptional *prasaṣti*. It requires a large up-front investment of labour, although this can to some extent be mitigated through improved digital solutions. In return, it allows the researcher to discern elusive features and patterns, and to do so from a perspective that affords generalisation more securely than the ‘hermeneutic’ approach while being more firmly and traceably grounded in the source material than the ‘historical’ approach. However, this methodology is not meant to replace other ways of studying similar texts, but to enrich knowledge by complementing, substantiating, qualifying or questioning previous findings, and by turning up new insights which can then be pursued in different ways. That said, the present account is very much a pilot study, and the methodology described herein is immature in spite of its complexity. Many of its details leave room

¹⁰⁵ See Neuendorf (2017, 244–272) for detailed discussion of statistical methods applicable in textual analysis.

for improvement, and the following pages summarise my thoughts on the possible directions of such refinement.

Now that a coding frame has been devised for the analysis of representation in Eastern Cālukya copper plates, it is in principle possible to deploy this instrument in new analyses. Doing so would augment (rather than replace) the dataset generated so far, and can accommodate the tweaking of some aspects of the coding frame, as discussed in 5.2. However, restarting from scratch with a qualitative analysis of a different body of texts in the same genre would also be edifying. There is no guarantee that the set of codes I have arrived at is the optimal one for studying representation in royal inscriptions, and the definitions I have created for the individual codes may not be sufficiently detailed and precise to allow coders other than myself to apply them consistently. Intercoder reliability or intersubjective agreement is central to most forms of textual analysis¹⁰⁶ and has been downplayed here because of the prolegomenous nature of my work. The issue definitely needs addressing before embarking on a similar study with a larger scope.

The overall conceptual model used in my analysis has proven workable, and also has scope for the revision of certain details without rendering new data incompatible with the existing ones. At the topmost level, the model involves a sharp divide between the representational data, which enter an analysis as dependent variables, and the metadata, diverse selections of which can be employed as independent variables. This divide is essential for the practical purposes of analysis, but is probably to a large part responsible for my initial failure to consciously recognise a fundamental kindred between the analytical data and some of the metadata. The ‘organic’ nature of these data, set out in 5.3, should be kept in mind when embarking on a revision of the data model. The metadata are further subdivided into the tiers of text and description. This too is a practical distinction, but driven by the nature of the raw data rather than by the exigencies of the analytical method. In 5.4, I consider alternatives to this two-tiered system. Within the description metadata, the formal ontological distinction of focus and target is fundamental to my approach, and the focus-and-orbit model provides a good fit for the way the representation of protagonists is constituted in the texts. However, the data conceptualised as orbit types and focus classes are ‘organic’ data in the sense hinted at above, and in 5.5 and 5.6 I examine how they might be better managed as such, in case the data model is to be revised without the need to keep new data compatible with the existing ones. Final-

¹⁰⁶ See for example Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012, 89–92) for an overview and Neuendorf (2017, 166–200) for in-depth practical details.

ly, in 5.7 I point to some specific ways in which the metadata recorded for analysis might be diversified, and in 5.8 I look out optimistically to future possibilities of integration with other fields of digital humanities.

5.2 The coding frame

Applying the established set of codes to additional copperplate charters would provide a compatible extension of the dataset available for quantitative analysis. Existing codes—where they are not distinguished sufficiently clearly, where their distinction is not expected to be relevant to analysis, or where the number of their instances in the corpus is very low—can be lumped together without necessitating a revision from the ground up.¹⁰⁷ If the added texts are by and large similar to the ones already coded, then it may be possible to reapply the coding frame as it is, or to enrich it with just a few novel codes for concepts absent from the Eastern Cālukya corpus.¹⁰⁸ However, if any new codes for another corpus are created by splitting or redefining existing codes, then the instances of the affected codes in the old corpus must be revisited and revised as needed. The more details are to change in the codes, the less feasible it becomes to combine the new corpus with the old, unless the old corpus is then comprehensively recoded with the altered coding frame.

Conversely, the conceptual hierarchy of categories and dimensions may be revised freely and safely for subsequent analyses. Although with hindsight this should have been obvious, I came only gradually to the realisation that the specific analytical codes are conceptually wholly separable from their classification, and that it is good practice to take advantage of this. The foregrounding of this thought may have been delayed by the practical necessity of integrating dimension and category names into my code names (2.4).¹⁰⁹ At any rate, once the coding had been completed and I had begun

¹⁰⁷ The distinction between such codes could be relegated to the level of properties or discarded altogether. Alternatively, properties as a whole could be eliminated from the coding frame as noted in 2.3. The distinctions they afford could in this case be represented in a proliferation of low-level individual codes, or they could be disregarded entirely.

¹⁰⁸ Thus, when I complemented the corpus with some earlier texts from the same region (Balogh in press 2025), a couple of new codes were added to cover specifically Buddhist values.

¹⁰⁹ For future applications, it may in fact be best to get rid of all indications of categories and dimensions in the names of individual codes.

working with the finished dataset, it became clear that representational categories do need revision time and again, and that such revision can be implemented easily and non-invasively. Because the assignment of codes to higher-order categories takes place mechanically (2.3), the categories are on a metalevel with respect to the codes rather than being ingrained in them. Consequently, the hierarchy itself is malleable: it can be reconceptualised at any time without requiring that the textual material be recoded, and instead associated with the specific codes by means of a lookup table (as in 3.7).

In fact, rethinking the hierarchy of codes to suit current interests is definitely desirable for any new study. My original dimensions have been set up in order to thematise all aspects of representation that occur in the corpus under study, but are only one possible way of doing so. There is room for improvement as regards consistency within some dimensions and distinctness across dimensions. Furthermore, because of the schema's comprehensiveness, some of the dimensions are much smaller in scope and prevalence than others. Including both 'rich' and 'poor' dimensions within a single analysis can muddle patterns that may be detectable in the latter when studied without the former. Indeed, specific research questions are best served by ignoring a portion of the individual codes and sorting the ones germane to the research into a smaller set of better-balanced dimensions.¹¹⁰ It is even possible in principle to set up hierarchies in which dimensions are not independent, so that some or all codes count toward more than one dimension.¹¹¹ However, while such a frame may constitute a more accurate model for the naturally polysemous content in the texts, it might well be too vague for quantitative analysis to have any usefulness.

5.3 *'Organic' data and soft classification*

From the first steps of my textual analysis journey, I have tended to conceive of analytical data as 'organic' in the sense that they are subtle to the degree

¹¹⁰ I have indicated this in my analysis of the representation of underlings (Balogh 2024, 159), and applied a greatly reduced coding frame in my analysis of Śaiva and Buddhist rhetoric (Balogh in press 2025).

¹¹¹ For instance, the claim that a person is a conqueror (/BEL:conquest) is treated in my codebook as a member of the dimension of Belligerence, but theoretically it could also be counted toward the dimension of Dominance. Proficiency in wielding weapons (/COM:skill:weapons) or handling mounts (/COM:skill:horseElephant) are factors of Competence, but could also contribute to Prowess and Belligerence.

of inscrutability and develop through complex interaction with the analyst in the process of interpretation. Conversely, metadata are often ‘inorganic’ inasmuch as a limited set of discrete values can be assigned to them quite unequivocally. The identity of a text’s issuer or the gender of a person described in a text may be subject to doubt, but only due to lack of information, and not because several interpretations may be concurrently valid. However, as I realise somewhat belatedly, other items of metadata—in particular, focus and orbit—are akin to analytical data in that they too can only be determined through close reading and careful judgement, and inevitably involve interpretation whereby their aspects relevant to study are collapsed to a particular value.

As recounted in 2.4, orbits have been recorded using a fairly extensive vocabulary, yet I ended up grouping the specific labels into a small number of metaclasses. In the course of working with my data, it dawned on me that this was because orbits are organic data, and the approach combining granular recording with soft classification—as described for content analytical data above (5.2)—is ideally suited for data of this nature. Many of the individual labels are too infrequent to be usable as grouping criteria in quantitative analysis, which is better served by broader categories. But there are several advantages to recording the granular detail in the data, as opposed to recording only a set of broader categories. First, the details are then accessible for qualitative study or for future quantitative use in an expanded corpus. Second and more importantly, their classification can then be reconceptualised at any time to suit current interest, while the laborious recording of metadata need only happen once, alongside the coding of content.

The main hurdles in applying this approach to organic metadata are on the one hand anticipating which of their dimensions are worth differentiating, and on the other hand, drawing the line in granularity.¹¹² Recording too many aspects in excessive detail would nullify the benefits provided by data reduction. Each possible value or applicable vocabulary term (for metadata as much as for content analytical data) must be defined with reasonable accuracy, and must be thus definable with reasonable brevity. Failing this, not only would it become extremely difficult to achieve reliability in recording, but the facility of applying alternative systems of categorisation would also be lost. The effort required for devising any plausible and coherent hierar-

¹¹² The term ‘dimension’ is not used here in the technical sense relevant to the context of coding hierarchy, but in a more generic sense meaning discrete aspects of a concept. In 5.5 and 5.6 below, I look specifically into the dimensions inherent in orbit and focus recording, and the potential granularity of these.

chy for a very large number of very intricately defined and difficult-to-distinguish items at the lowest level of the data would be comparable to that inherent in the close reading of the original texts.

5.4 *Tiers of metadata*

Text metadata and description metadata are employed in the same way in quantitative analysis, and both can potentially include organic as well as inorganic items. What sets them apart is the unit of recording with which they are associated, as set out in 2.1: texts are physically discrete by nature, whereas additional and more subtle criteria play a role in the unitisation of descriptions. All metadata enter the analysis in association with individual items of representational data, and each record of the dataset (3.7) has slots for all metadata items. In the course of data creation, however, separately recording all metadata for each and every representational code would have been terribly inefficient, not to mention slow and conducive to human error.

In the same way, eliminating the class of texts from the ontology and recording metadata only on the tier of descriptions would greatly increase redundancy in the preparatory stage, as all text metadata would have to be recorded repeatedly for each description item in a text. To be sure, with two separate tiers, the transformations involved in passing the metadata down to the individual data records (3.7) are tedious, but could be automated in the future and are even at present less labour-intensive and far less error-prone than redundant encoding. However, it may be possible in the future (5.8) to utilise text metadata recorded elsewhere instead of recording these data specially for textual analysis. In this case, a single item of text metadata (a unique text identifier) would be sufficient and could be redundantly recorded for smaller units such as descriptions, thus dispensing with the tier of texts in the data model.

Conversely, I have also considered an alternative with three tiers, where chunks of description segmented by target (as at present) but sharing a common focus would be enclosed in a larger unit, which we might call a ‘diorama.’¹¹³ Metadata pertaining to the focus would then be recorded for dioramas alone (rather than, as at present, redundantly for each description unit). The primary reason this was not implemented was that even while reducing redundancy in the metadata encoded on each container, it would have in-

¹¹³ Thus, in Box 4 (section 2.4), segments of the same colour would constitute a single diorama.

creased redundancy in the number of discrete containers. Dioramas are often interrupted by structural elements (prose or verse, 3.2) and occasionally by passages pertaining to other foci. Such cases would require the creation not only of multiple description elements (as they do now), but also of a separate diorama element for each of these. Then again, the structural elements are not essential for analysis and, should they be discarded from the document schema, a three-tiered system of metadata is worth considering.¹¹⁴ Passing inherited metadata down from yet another level to the base tier of representational codes would be even more complex than with the present solution, but likewise manageable.

As the final dataset for quantitative analysis would still consist of records for representational codes fully outfitted with metadata, the implementation of a single-tiered or three-tiered system on newly coded texts need not render the data incompatible with the existing dataset created using the two-tiered metadata setup.

5.5 Enhancing orbit data

The vocabulary applied in the recording of orbits consists mostly of terms belonging to the domain of kinship. Their granularity in my present data has been somewhat constrained, chiefly due to lack of anticipated usefulness in quantitative analysis. For example, ancestral relatives more than three generations removed from the focus are lumped as ‘ancestor’ and ‘maternal ancestor,’ while roughly contemporary collateral relations are lumped as ‘cousin.’ Where the best-fitting orbit label was deemed insufficient to characterise the target’s relation to the focus, I used a remark to clarify that relation (e.g. ‘rival collateral’ for a cousin).

Now that I have come to see orbits as organic data, for future analysis of larger corpora I would prefer a broader vocabulary of kinship terms, which can then be sorted into soft categories depending on anytime research interest. Finer distinction among cousins and affinal kin is certainly warranted. Careful planning is, however, essential for devising a suitable vocabulary. It should be capable, on the one hand, of capturing detail in several potentially interesting dimensions,¹¹⁵ and on the other hand, of accommodating the

¹¹⁴ Or the metadata could be recorded in a format other than XML elements, in which case overlap with structural elements would not be a problem.

¹¹⁵ Such as generational removal, horizontal distance, lineality and affinity.

potential vagueness of texts,¹¹⁶ all the while remaining manageable in size and clarity—a tall order. It may also be advisable to split the special kinship class ‘lineage’ so that maternal and paternal lineage can be catered for separately; to introduce a label for mythical ancestors,¹¹⁷ and possibly also for dynastic progenitors.¹¹⁸

Some of the specific relations expressed by kinship terms have parallels in other domains. The only other domain accommodated by my current vocabulary is that of preceptorial relationship, which includes the terms guru, grandguru, archguru and spiritual lineage, paralleling father, grandfather, ancestor (or rather dynastic progenitor) and lineage respectively. Further specific terms may be added to this domain, and—depending on corpus—additional domains may be desirable to cater for entities like merchant guilds, and possibly *gotras*, both of which are analogous to the kinship term ‘lineage.’¹¹⁹

A more complex alternative to the orbit system would be to reduce orbit to a binary variable (with the values self or satellite), and to specify satellite relationships using a combination of variables, such as domain (e.g. sanguinal kin, affinal kin, preceptorial chain, etc.), generational removal (positive and negative numbers and zero), degree of closeness (a positive number indicating the removal of the closest shared ancestor, e.g. 1 for siblings, 2 for first cousins, etc.), lineality (maternal, paternal), and so forth.¹²⁰ In such a

¹¹⁶ So that it should include generic terms such as ‘brother’ and ‘cousin’ as well as more specific ones from ‘younger full brother’ and ‘female paternal cross-cousin’ possibly all the way to ‘elder paternal half-brother from a mother of inferior status’ and ‘male maternal first cousin once removed senior.’

¹¹⁷ Mythical ancestors are featured, and in some cases described, in the ‘Purāṇic’ origin story presented in the very late grants of the Eastern Cālukya dynasty. In the present dataset, they have been recorded with the same orbit token as historic ancestors, distinguished from the latter only by the term ‘mythical’ used instead of individual identifiers in the ID field.

¹¹⁸ Again, we teeter on the edge of the slippery slope of proliferation. Would a ‘mythical line progenitor’ need to be distinguished? Was Pulakeśin II (flourishing in the early sixth century) any less mythical to eleventh-century audiences than a certain Vijayāditya who, according to the Cālukya origin myth, first moved to the Deccan but was vanquished by Trilocana Pallava? Was this Vijayāditya less mythical than his alleged ancestor Arjuna the Pāṇḍava? And are these people then ancestors or line progenitors? Can a line have more than one progenitor? And so forth.

¹¹⁹ Civic communities are not featured in the corpus so far studied. *Gotras*, on the rare occasions where they are described rather than just named, have been lumped with spiritual lineages.

¹²⁰ Gender is in fact already such a variable, which renders the gender-based distinctions in orbit labels redundant.

scenario too, the level of complexity must be weighed carefully against the anticipated advantages.

5.6 Enhancing focus data

The focus classes, as they now stand, are an amalgam of social class, politico-economic function, and role in the grant process. Sovereign foci are always donors; ritualist foci are always recipients but include householder Brahmins and temple priests; dignitary foci may be court officials, subordinate rulers, or both, or neither, and may play the role of donee, instigator or executor. When considering any classification schema more complex than the one adopted here, I always stumbled on uncertainties (where the text just does not give enough information to allocate a person to one pigeonhole or another), overlaps (where a single person has or may have more than one role or function) and on exceptions (where the entire corpus provides just one, or a scant few, occupants for a pigeonhole). Such subtleties too are, for the time being, noted only in remarks and not recorded in the structured data.

Armed with hindsight, I now see that focus data are also organic data, and as such, are best recorded in finer detail. For example, I have found (Balogh 2024, 138–139) that even in the limited data generated so far, ‘aristocrat,’ ‘minister’ and ‘bureaucrat’ dignitaries have palpably different representational profiles. Supplementing the existing focus classes with new ones such as ‘antagonist,’ ‘rival,’ ‘ally,’ ‘suzerain’ and ‘subordinate’ may also open up interesting research possibilities,¹²¹ and it may be likewise useful to distinguish specific kinds of ritualist, such as householder Brahmins, temple

¹²¹ The number of times such persons are described at any length in the Veṅgī corpus was deemed too small to dedicate focus classes to them. As noted in 3.3, antagonists described as formidable can enhance the representation of a protagonist, so if antagonists were to be recognised as foci, then the attribution concerning the protagonist will need to be tagged on a locus outside the description of the antagonist. Rival collateral members of the ruling house are repeatedly mentioned in the Eastern Cālukya records and have been recorded simply as ‘cousin’ satellites of the sovereign with a remark on their rival status. The proposed classes of allies and subordinates may be difficult to ascertain from the text and to distinguish from the aristocratic type of dignitary. The Veṅgī Cālukyas never acknowledge a suzerain explicitly; when King Dānārṇava admits in VengiCalukya00039 that he obtained his kingdom from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler, the latter is not described at all, and when Rājārāja Narendra in VengiCalukya00079 recounts how the armies of Rājendra Coḷa expelled the Rāṣṭrakūṭas from Veṅgī, the latter is presented simply as the king’s maternal uncle.

priests, preceptors and court chaplains. The problems of uncertainties, overlaps and exceptions can be largely surmounted by soft-sorting these specific focus types into metaclasses.

A finer classification of foci along these lines would still draw no sharp lines between the dimensions of class and function, which are in most cases inextricably mixed. As in the case of orbits, vagueness and ambiguity in the sources must be accommodated by incorporating some generic terms,¹²² and definitions must be formulated rigorously.¹²³ Roles, however, could after all be recorded in a variable separate from that for focus classification, allowing to distinguish, for example, between dignitaries featured as donees, instigators and executors. People whose roles are not clear from the texts can simply be left out of any role-based analyses, and conversely, roles can simply be ignored in analyses focussing on a different independent variable.

5.7 Enriching metadata

If new or redefined text metadata are required for a new analysis,¹²⁴ they can be introduced seamlessly into the overall metadata scheme, and the existing dataset can be complemented with such data in a relatively painless way in order to keep corpora compatible. Rather than retagging the base texts in XML and then recoding their content, new data slots can be added as extra columns to the final dataset, while revised data can replace or supplement pre-existing columns. The data cells can then be filled manually with identical values for each record belonging to a particular text, or populated using a lookup table (3.7) that matches text identifiers to particular values of the new data. Since the number of texts is a magnitude lower than the number of descriptions, this can be accomplished with a reasonable investment of

¹²² Such as the present ‘dignitary,’ to use in cases where a more specific identification is not possible.

¹²³ For instance, is ‘rival’ a special kind of ‘antagonist’ or should these two classes be defined so that each excludes the other?

¹²⁴ New text metadata might indicate, for instance, the inscription’s language, its medium (if stone inscriptions are included in an analysis), or its authenticity (to allow for the exclusion of potentially spurious grants). As an example of redefined metadata, in the generic method presented here, sectarian orientation was determined simply on the basis of the donee’s religion if explicitly recorded, and identified as ‘Brahmanical’ otherwise. A more complex method (implicitly acknowledging sectarian orientation as an organic data item) has been employed in my comparative analysis of the rhetoric of Śaiva and Buddhist grants (Balogh in press 2025).

effort. Novel description metadata, conversely, would for the same reason be difficult to add to the existing dataset. If the schema for description metadata is to be expanded or altered, then compatibility with the previously generated data will have to be relinquished.¹²⁵

The focus-orbit model has not been devised with the objective of capturing complex relationships between protagonists and supporting cast, such as when the persons being described include satellites of two (or more) foci of the same class within a single text,¹²⁶ or satellites of satellites,¹²⁷ or foci who are themselves in a satellite orbit to another focus.¹²⁸ Such fine distinctions are irrelevant to the analyses I have conducted so far, focussing on the representation of protagonists as enhanced by the inclusion of supporting

¹²⁵ Some data associated with specific people (as for instance *varṇa*) may, however, be populated using a dedicated lookup table on the basis of the target identifier in the descriptions, which is less labour-intensive than entering new data separately for each description.

¹²⁶ For example, the executor (*ājñāpti*) of some grants is described in a stanza, occasionally augmented by brief descriptions of his father or grandfather. He is thus a dignitary focus, and if the donee is likewise a dignitary, then we have two dignitary foci within the text. In the data as recorded, the satellites of the two are not distinguished.

¹²⁷ For example, in VengiCalukya00026, the donee is Śrī-Mahādevī, the wife of the castellan (*kaṭakarāja*) Vijayāditya. She is thus a protagonist, a focus of the dignitary class, with satellites including grandparents, parents and her husband the castellan. But he too has satellites of his own: a father, a grandfather and a lineage (each of which are also known from other grants). He could have been recorded as a separate dignitary focus, but I did not consider this appropriate, as he is not a protagonist of the grant. The king Bhīma I is rewarding Śrī-Mahādevī for Vijayāditya's services, so although this is not stated explicitly, I assume that Vijayāditya has deceased by the time the grant was made. My way out of this quandary was simply to bundle the description of Vijayāditya (recorded as a satellite of Śrī-Mahādevī) together with those of his satellites, obscuring the fact that these satellites are separate persons.

¹²⁸ This case is not essentially different from the previous one, the distinction being that here, both of the persons are recognised as protagonists of the grant, presented in their own right rather than as supporting cast. Thus, in VengiCalukya00070, the minister Māveṇa and his mistress Sabbākā procure a grant for their son. Sabbākā is plainly not just an accessory to Māveṇa, so the two were recorded as separate dignitary foci; the fact that they are in a marriage-like relationship is not, however, reflected in the data. In a structurally analogous but sociologically different setup, VengiCalukya00047 is a grant instigated by the castellan Durgarāja (incidentally, the son of the Vijayāditya mentioned in the previous note) for his minister Musiya. Both are described in the text, and both are dignitary foci, but again, the fact that Musiya is an underling of Vijāditya (rather than directly of the sovereign) is not discernible from the data alone.

players. Moreover, any particular complex setup is unique or rare in the corpus, so the amount of data they involve is too small to be of any consequence for quantitative study. To keep unusual cases accessible to qualitative exploration, I recorded brief notes in the remarks attached to the description. For a much larger textual corpus, or one with a higher incidence of such compound scenarios, it may be useful to supplement the data model with yet another item of description metadata. This might be named ‘dependency’ and take the personal ID of a protagonist as its value. In conjunction with a self orbit (i.e. when applied to a focus person), the presence of this item would mean an unspecified association with that protagonist (e.g. being married to them or being their subordinate), while in conjunction with a satellite orbit, it would be used to specify which (of possibly several) foci this person is a satellite of.¹²⁹

In addition to the ontology, my schema for description metadata incorporates a couple of ‘metarules’ that make certain items mandatory or unavailable, contingent on certain other items. Thus, religion can only be recorded if the focus is identified as a ritualist, while an ID cannot be recorded if the focus is a ritualist or if the target is a collective entity. These rules were introduced in order to make the priming of texts with metadata more efficient and less prone to error, and are enforced by a simple XML schema¹³⁰ employed in the preparation of the texts, but are not essential for the conceptual framework and can be freely revised as needed. Individual identifiers for collective entities, for example, may be useful for a corpus where nonroyal dynasties or religious communities are represented more than sporadically.¹³¹

5.8 *Epilogue*

The ultimate issue that begs to be addressed is integration with other aspects of digital humanities. On the one hand, as noted in 2.7, the texts used

¹²⁹ As a more complex solution, dependencies could also be recorded in more detail using RDF triples, complete with a predicate for the kind of relationship between the two actors. This level of detail is unlikely to be relevant to the textual analysis of representation, but including it in the metadata while preparing texts for analysis may pave the way for an analysis of dependency networks irrespective of representational data.

¹³⁰ To be published with my technical account (Balogh in preparation).

¹³¹ So long as collective entities other than the issuing sovereign’s dynasty are as rare in the corpus as in the Eastern Cālukya plates, the existing record of the dynastic affiliation of each text can be used in place of an ID for such entities.

as raw material have been forked away from their living digital editions and are what is essentially a dead end, which is not ideal. Now that digital Indology is starting to accumulate a critical mass of machine-actionable texts, ways are being sought to supplement the electronic editions with more and more added value. Researchers want to slice and label various chunks of the text in the interest of palaeography, of lemmatisation and dictionary-building, of prosopography, of gazetteers and of diplomatics—to name just a few fields prominent in my purview. I optimistically expect that we will soon have a technically feasible method for integrating all this annotation and more—such as content analytical annotation—in a way that will still permit working on one aspect of the text without being swamped in code pertinent only to other aspects.

But on the other hand, integration with those other aspects is desirable, and in principle achievable: many of the metadata for textual analysis should not need to be recorded separately as ‘metadata for textual analysis.’ During my preparation of the texts, data such as the identity of the sovereign who issued the charter and the approximate date at which the text was inscribed have been encoded into the XML files used as input. But it should shortly be possible to simply retrieve such data from the metadata already encoded for the digital editions (in a TEI header or in a relational database). The integration of gazetteer and prosopography data can be expected to follow, so that it should also be possible to call down, rather than painstakingly re-encode, other metadata items such as the gender and social class of a particular protagonist, the geolocation of the land granted in a charter, and so forth. When embarking on a preliminary investigation of the applicability of textual analysis methodology to representation in copperplate grants, bespoke solutions were necessary to keep the total investment of effort down to a reasonable level. But for a larger and sustained project along these lines, a greater upfront investment in a digital infrastructure conducive to integration would mean a saving of labour in the long run.

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